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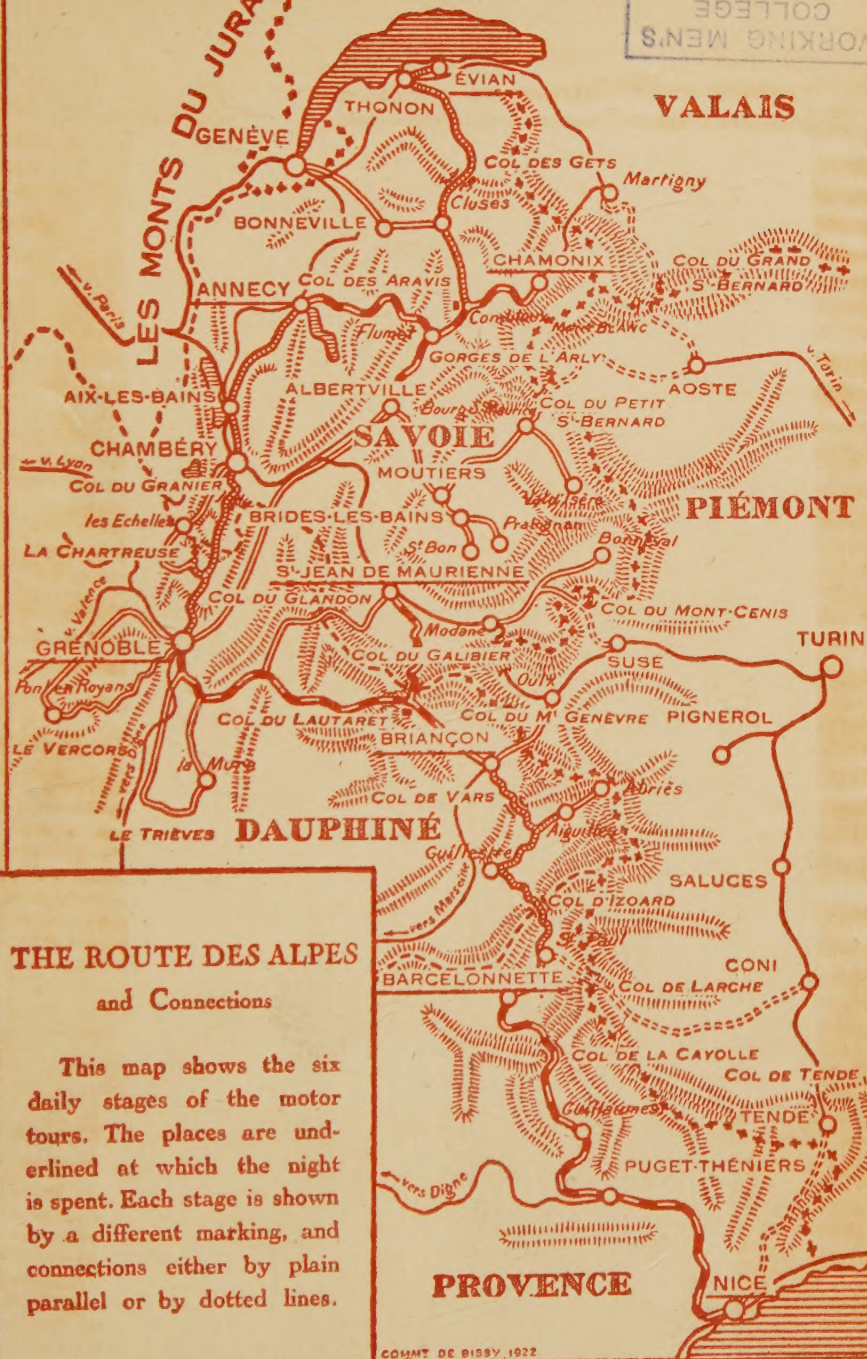
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NICE TO EVIAN

BY THE ROUTE DES ALPES



By HENRI FERRAND

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The Côte d'Azur : A Garden at Cabbé.

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PREFACE

The object of the Route des Alpes is to provide a necessary link between the several lateral valleys which intersect the mountain ranges from the high Alpine ridge down along the course of the Rhone. Every secondary tributary forms its own basin separated from its neighbour by important ramifications, occasionally at high altitudes, through which at rare intervals a passage might be rendered possible. The carriage routes ran through the valleys, but on leaving the plains, and in order to pass from one to another it was necessary to make such wide detours that the use of such roads was hardly possible.

On the other hand one realises that the beauty of the mountain scenery increases the higher the altitude, the more magnificent is the impression and it is desirable to open up ways of communication as near as possible to the great chain. Such are the ideas which governed the laying out of the "Route".

To pass from the basin of the Var into that of the Ubaye a stream which then existed was used for joining up the basin of the Verdon by the Col of the Cols Saint-Michel and Allos; this connecting with the direct entrance through the Col de la Cayolle proceeded close to the frontier. Between the basins of the Ubaye and the Guil there existed only footpaths and a strategic track for heavy transport. From the basin of the Guil to that of the Durance one used the old way of the Col Izoard, the same ancient route of the Col du Lautaret which allowed of carriages from the valley of the Durance to the valley of the Isère. Strategical necessities have sketched out the construction of a very difficult route over the very high Col du Galibier; it may be considered that the final project carried as far as the banks of the Lerman would stretch to the exciting scenery of the Col d'Iseran and the Col du Bonhomme toward the valley of the Arc. But while waiting for these important works to be accomplished, the Route proceeds by Oisans to Grenoble, and by the "massif" of the Chartreuse (Cols de Porte, du Cucheron et du Frêne) to Chambéry and Aix-les-Bains. Very lovely country takes us to the Lake of Annecy, one of the gems of the Alps where a glorious panorama awaits the traveller.

From the outskirts of Chamonix and the foot of Mont Blanc, it would be splendid to cross the giant "massif" of the Brévent and the Buet by the Col d'Anterne and in passing see the marvellous Horseshoe Circle. This will undoubtedly come in the future. For the present we must be contented with the way by the Col de Châtillon and the Col des Gets which, rounding the chief difficulty, leads to the basin of the Dranse, thence to Thonon and to Evian.

With the added services of autocars in conjunction with the P. L. M. the journey through the Route des Alpes brings endless enchantment. Moreover the facilities of the Route are such that it can be used at will for linking up the numerous Alpine centres which it encounters.

Rarely is the Route traversed without a break. A stay at Barcelonnette will no doubt some day introduce travellers to la Haute Ubaye. At present the chief breaks are at Aiguilles for the splendours of the Haut Guil, the belvederes of Abriès and the superb pyramid of Viso; Grenoble for visiting Chartreuse and Vercors and Chamonix for the giant Mont Blanc.





Nice : Albert Ist. Garden, Jetty, Promenade and Centenary Monument.

CHAPTER I

THE COTE D'AZUR

Nice, its surroundings and its rivals: Cannes, Monaco, Monte-Carlo and Mentone

The very name, Côte d'Azur, evokes the image of a gracious and lovely land. The traveller who sees it for the first time, cannot fail to be struck with astonishment, for he experiences the profound delight of beholding a reality which satisfies his dreams and offers him, in perfection of line and colour, his ideal conception of the beauties of Nature.

Leaving Paris at night, the most dramatic moment is when the train suddenly emerges in the early morning, on the Bay of Agay. Under the delicate, ever-growing magic of the rising sun, the sea with its fringe of foam breaking on the red rocks, the branches of the pine trees swaying



St. Tropez.

in the soft but vibrating light, make a perfect picture, a revelation which at once captivates and entrances the human faculties. And all along this well-named Corniche d'Or, such vivid sensations are maintained and renewed. As the traveller passes Pointe Antéore, Cap Roux, and the Rochers du Trayas, his enthusiasm rises to ever greater heights, and reaches a climax at the Pointe de l'Esquillon; it calms gently down in the tranquil but ravishing beauty of Théoule, having tasted that quintessence of delight aroused by every part of this wonderful coast. The exuberant vegetation strikes the dominant note and one might well imagine oneself transported in a dream to the far East.

This region is so lavishly dowered that even when the sun, its most powerful ally, fails it, it has charms of another kind to display. Under a leaden sky, when the Mistral scatters the cavalry of clouds into flying squadrons, one witnesses the grand spectacle of Nature in revolt. The conflict spreads to the great waves which roll up and break on the rocks, and to the swaying pines, twisted and sighing, which sweep the sea with their branches. Such impressive sights are often to be seen at Lavandou, Cavalaire or round the island of St. Honorat.



The Bay of Trayas.

As a rule the handiwork of man destroys the beauty of Nature and one has reason to regret the buildings which mar certain shores with deplorable architecture. But on the Riviera, light and vegetation blend these faults into a larger harmony and one only notices here and there a collection of white flecks which shine out from the prevailing greenery and add to the general effect.

Nice boasts of being the capital of this delightful region. This sovereignty is acknowledged by the name of the bay along which it stretches, *Baie des Anges*. A natural development of the Roman *Cemenelum* (Cimiez), the present city of Nice grew up while the eyes of man were still blind to the beauties of Nature. It was in vain that the Dukes of Savoy and the Kings of Sardinia loaded Nice with prodigal favours, in vain that to develop its commerce they excavated its harbour, the Port Lympia; it lay dormant on the banks of the Paillon and gave the few visitors who frequented it, even the famous Topffer, the impression of a sleepy and purposeless place.

Its return to the family of France awakened it and the arrival of the railway gave it new life. One cannot say, as of Cannes or St. Raphael,

what one person made it fashionable. The general public hailed it gladly from the moment Nice was ready to receive it.

A wise and intelligent administration knew how to profit from this impulse and to make the place more attractive. It laid out that wonderful *Promenade des Anglais* along the shore, a Promenade which stretches out further and further every year, and now extends from the mouth of the Paillon to that of the Var. On the banks of this torrential river, whose stony bed is a distressing sight, it cast the magic spell of its Casino and its Place Masséna; it built hotels, villas and gardens on a well thought out plan, forming a new quarter which joined the railway to the town.

As always in similar circumstances, visitors flocked to the place as soon as facilities offered. The town began to spread out over the surround-

ing neighbourhood, gardens disappeared under new buildings till the whole plain was covered, and the beautiful girdle of hills which form its *Couronne de Vénus*, is now threatened in its turn, by the impetuous spread of villas and country-houses. The climate which allows of the cultivation of oranges in the open air, has made Nice the winter paradise of the chilly inhabitants of Europe. If the English, who are great travellers, were its first patrons, their number was soon equalled and excelled by a cosmopolitan crowd. The French, so slow to appreciate what lies within their reach, were infatuated by it, and Parisians now possess the



Terrace of Monte-Carlo.



Cannes : Promenade de la Croisette.

majority of its green and lovely retreats. That has given it an undeniable *cachet* of good taste and has lined its chief streets with magnificent shops. There is no great Parisian house dealing in dress or jewellery which has not its branch in the *Avenue de la Victoire* or the *Avenue de Verdun*.

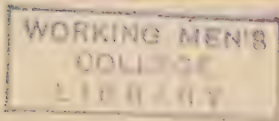
Encouraged by this constant developement, Nice has continued to grow along the Paillon, and has created on its banks the wonderful garden of Albert I, where we find the column commemorating the reunion of Nice with France, near the original building of the Pier Promenade. But Nice knew how to profit better by its natural attractions than by erecting huge monuments; its Castle has a terrace with a wonderful view, in sight of the waterfall of the Vésubie; Montboron has its fragrant gardens, and the little hill of Cimiez its parks and villas. Nice also evokes memories of former greatness by its arenas, its old Abbey of Cimiez, its *Palais des Lascaris*, its statues of Masséna, Garibaldi, Gambetta and so on.

As Queen of the Côte d'Azur, Nice is surrounded by a distinguished retinue, who are in some respects her rivals.

Less than a century ago, *Cannes* was nothing but a fishing village; it owed its fame among the English to a misfortune that happened to Lord Brougham, but profited so wisely by that event, that it soon

became one of the most fashionable places on this coast. The city itself is of little interest, but it extends along the shore for a great distance. Gardens, villas, hotels and castles extend beyond Mont Chevalier as far as la Bocca, and in the other direction beyond the Pointe de la Croisette. Jealous of the Pier Promenade of Nice, Cannes built out ingenious terraces to establish its sumptuous Casino in the middle of its bay. Mindful of its founder and his hosts, it erected a statue to Lord Brougham among its palm-trees and more recently another to Edward VII.

Monaco, so magnificently situated on its picturesque rock, might seem less sensitive to the vagaries of fashion, but it is practically joined to Monte Carlo, whose special attraction of the gaming table is enhanced by an incomparable situation. This new centre is spreading out in all directions. After having built over in La Condamine, all the space which separates it from the principal rock it blossomed out beyond the borders of the principality, in the brilliant suburb of Beau Soleil. The houses are supported on their projecting rocks by cyclopean walls, and this group of little towns is now joined up in one great centre of crowded streets and busy avenues, breathing luxury and opulence from every pore.



Mentone.



Touët-de-Beuil and the Var Valley.

CHAPTER II

THE VALLEY OF THE VAR

The Mescla, Touët-de-Beuil and the Gorges of the Cians — Puget-Théniers — Entrevaux and the Pont de Gueydan

The Route des Alpes sets out magnificently along the *Promenade des Anglais*. During this stretch of more than five kilometers by the sea-shore, the view of the eastern coast changes with every turn of the wheel as if it were a moving diorama. At first the mass of Mont Boron stretches in front of us, then the peninsula of Saint-Jean appears from behind it, gradually revealing its villas and hotels. Further on Cap Martin comes into view with its magnificent woods, further still the beauty of Mentone, the Rochers Rouges and Bordighera enchant us, each new promontory spreading new visions of beauty before us.



La Mescla.

Near the Hippodrome, the road leaves the shore cuts across the plain, following the railway, and arrives on the left bank of the Var.

We have lost sight of the sea; the Alps now lie before us; on the right, carefully cultivated and terraced hills, on the left the majestic escarpment of the Baou de St. Jeannet, and between them the dark valley through which the river makes its way and by which we will penetrate into this region. This background seems to draw rapidly nearer, the ramparts on each side close in and we find ourselves in a wide corridor where the road runs beside the *Sud-France* railway which has just rejoined it through a tunnel.

At the foot of the Baou St. Jeannet, which now appears a formidable mountain, the railway divides; one branch crosses the river and runs up the right bank towards Gattières, whose houses we see spread over the slope. The other branch serves the scattered villages towards the East.

The factories of Saint-Martin-du-Var are a blot on the landscape otherwise enhanced by the arrival of the river Estéron; the valley now takes on the intimate charm of a gorge; steep winding roads come down from each side, on the right from La Roquette, on the left from Pont



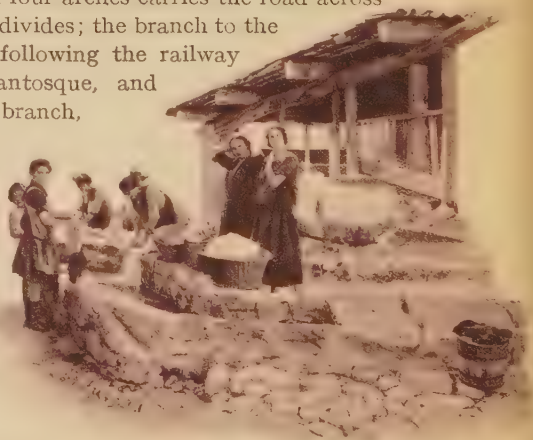
Old Gateway at Vence.

*Puget-Théniers.*

Charles-Albert of Roquestéron, both names testifying to the rocky character of this district.

The region we pass through becomes more and more austere; suddenly the heights on the right open up for the waters of the Vésubie to pass through. The junction of these two gorges is marked by precipitous cliffs and foaming waters. A bridge of four arches carries the road across the river; arrived on the other side it divides; the branch to the east runs up the Vésubie and leads, following the railway line, to St. Jean-de-la-Rivière, Lantosque, and St. Martin-de-Vésubie. The other branch, which is our *Route des Alpes*, still accompanied by the Sud-France line, penetrates into the Lower Gorges of the Var by the Pass of Ciaudan.

The road has been engineered with much skill: as the narrow passage cut by the age-long action of the water, hardly leaves room for

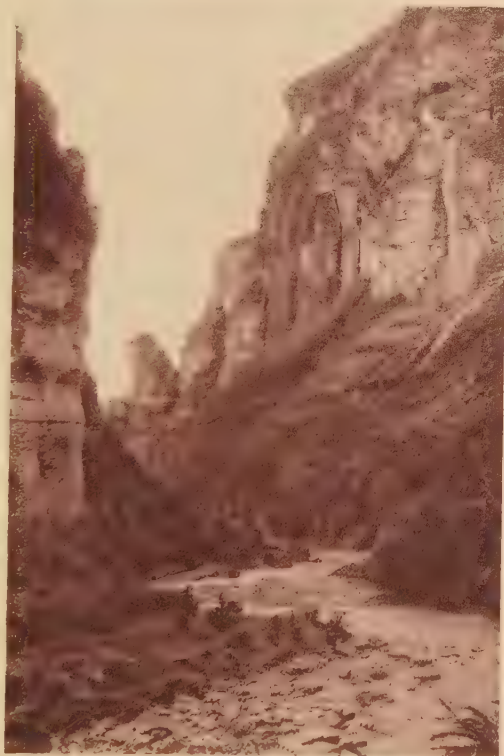
*"The Lavoir" at Puget-Théniers.*

the river and the road, not to mention the railway, it has been necessary to resort to viaducts and tunnels.

Presently we come to another opening with another torrent rushing down it, the Tinée, bringing the waters of the high mountains of the frontier chain, to the Var. But this tributary, a torrent of impressive grandeur here receives the significant name of the Mescla which means confluence. A road and a railway run up its valley too, and lead towards Clans and St-Sauveur. The main road crosses the Var and forces its way up the right bank in an equally wild and magnificent continuation of the Gorges of the Var.

The road, which has run in a northerly direction since leaving the the sea-shore, turns westwards on leaving the Mescla. Soon the steep hills which enclose the valley take on a gentler aspect, easy slopes succeed the cliffs. A strategic road crosses the river and winds up to the fort of Picciarvet (about 1968 feet), then after another obstruction which forces both the road and the river to a double bend,

the valley broadens out at the bridge of Malaussène by which the road crosses back to the left bank and enters on a little elongated plain, the bed of an ancient lake. This little tract, which stretches away to the East, is a charming oasis given over to the cultivation of vines and fig-trees. On a height to the right, the village of *Touët-de-Beuil* perches



The Gorge of Cians.

curiously on a rocky cornice with an over-hanging rock like a roof above it. Its only street passes below the houses, many of which are now deserted, their inhabitants having come down to the foot of the slope where they have founded the modern village of *Touet-du-Var*. It

is provided with a good hotel, and is an excellent starting point for an expedition to the Gorge of the Cians.

Of all the Gorges formed by the action of water on rocks, that of the Cians is one of the most curious. Over a course of 20 kilometers, it twice cuts a passage through the limestone heights: the upper part, near the village of Beuil, is the narrowest and is cut through brightly coloured rock. Above Beuil it spreads out into a wider tract whose gradients are however impossible for carriages. That difficulty made it impossible to graft this road on to the *Route des Alpes*, but it is one of the finest motor excursions within the radius of Nice.



The Church at Puget-Théniers.

Beyond the entrance to the Gorge of the Cians, the valley of the Var widens out, and the road passes through a stretch of country without much character, as far as Puget-Théniers. This small town, the headquarters of the district, built in the shelter of a great bank which protects it from the caprices of the Var, has nothing to offer the visitor except the



Entrevaux.

remains of an old church built, it is said, by the Templars, and a Fort, which is also in ruins. But a short distance away one can get a glimpse of the Gorges of the Roudoule.

The district which opens up after passing the Gorges of the Cians, is given over to the cultivation of vines, olives and figtrees, and at the entrance to a rocky pass the road suddenly comes on the curious old town of *Entrevaux*.

It stands like a sentinel mounted to guard the outlet of the higher valleys of the Var. At the time when projectiles had no great carrying power, Entrevaux was an impregnable citadel. Surrounded by battlemented walls which extend right up to the Castle, standing on the top of its hill, with little winding streets so narrow that they are impassable for carriages, only connected with the right bank by a fortified bridge with two towers, it was an entrenched camp which contemptuously withstood all assaults. It still presents an extraordinarily picturesque appearance.



Gateway at Entrevaux



The Bridge of Gueydan.

CHAPTER III

THE GORGES OF DALUIS

Guillaumes and its Castle — The Val d'Entraunes —
The Col de la Cayolle and the Valley of the Bachelard
— Barcelonnette

The general lie of the valley continues to be westerly, but by a geographical caprice, it is now merely the bed of a tributary. The northern bank, which is extremely steep, is suddenly cut by a deep fissure, and the stream issuing from it is dignified by the name of the Upper Var, the direct torrent being now known as the Vaire. There are roads up both valleys, but the *Sud-France* railway to Digne, follows the valley of the Vaire; a tramway runs up in the other direction as far as Guillaumes.



The Pass at Daluis.

Lower down, the *Porte-du-Var* is crossed by two bridges, a steep old ruined bridge, now falling to pieces, which was used by the old road, and a modern bridge with a wide low arch used by the new road which reaches it through a short tunnel.

At the bridge-head on the right bank we come to the junction of two roads. That to the left was at one time followed by the *Route des Alpes* before the opening of the Col de la Cayolle. That to the right is the one now used by motors.

After crossing the Pont de Gueydan, the road inclines towards the north, up the right bank of the Var, through a wide, bare valley. High peaks begin to appear on the horizon, and the foot of the valley is torn by the vagaries of the river. A short level stretch leads to the village of *Daluis* (2076 feet) after which the road begins to climb again. Towards the end of this little valley the two opposing heights, rocky and precipitous, draw so near together, that they only leave a dark and narrow channel between them, for the torrent. The road, which has continued to ascend, climbs up to the summit of this fissure (2758) and enters on one of the most enchanting stretches of the whole *Route*.

For a distance of nearly 8 kilometers, the road runs along nearly



The Pass at Daluis : The Pont des Roberts.

500 feet above the level of the gorge : its course is very varied, its windings often cut by tunnels or crossed by bridges, so that we can admire the scenery from many points of view. Sometimes the opposite slope stands out in all its magnificence, from its summit right down to its base where the green waters of the Var dash against the rocks, sending up showers of spray and roaring like a captive giant : sometimes we are so shut in that the view is extremely limited. The vivid colours, intensified by the southern exposure, give a curious impression, the contrast of the bright red rocks against the cooler but varied colours of water and sky. This gorge of the Var, generally called the *Gorge de Daluis* from the village near which it begins, and also to distinguish it from the lower Gorge, is one of the most sensational marvels of the Maritime Alps.

The Gorge is succeeded as usual by a wide valley, the road runs down to the level of the torrent which it crosses by the Pont des Roberts (2460 feet). This well cultivated valley is surrounded by green

Herds at Guillaumes.





The Old Château at Guillaumes.

*Guillaumes.*

hills, and soon the imposing outline of the Castle of Guillaumes is seen on the horizon.

The market centre of the Valley of Entraunes, situated at the junction of the Var and the Tuébi, the city of *Guillaumes* was formerly a stronghold, fortified in the xth century by Guillaume II, Count of Provence, after whom it is called. The Castle which dominates it was often occupied by his successors. It is now in ruins; only a few fragments of the ramparts remain, and the fear of inundation occupies the minds of its inhabitants more than the fear of attack. One sets out from here to visit the curious village of Péone and to climb up to the Observatory of Mont Monnier (9246 feet). It is unlikely that this little capital will ever become a summer resort.

On leaving Guillaumes, the road continues up the left bank of the Var, which now takes a westerly direction; this upper part of the valley is known as the *Val d'Entraunes*. The alternation of plateau and gorge, now gives place to the more usual physiognomy of a mountain valley, though here we have curious little rounded hills. After the detour of La Barlatte, the road passes through *Villeneuve d'Entraunes* (3083 feet), and then crosses the torrent to follow the right bank. We soon come to



The Valley of the Var above Guillaumes.

St-Martin-d'Entraunes (3460 feet), its houses almost hidden from sight under its walnut trees. We must glance at the old church with its sundial bearing the curious inscription, *Me sol, vos pastor regit* and the arms of the Templars carved on its door.

The scenery of this part of the valley is very charming and the slopes are more thickly wooded than further down.

The road continues along the right bank with occasional glimpses of the peaks which now begin to rise before us. Soon the tower of *Entraunes* comes into view and at a distance of 7 kilometers from *St. Martin*, we reach that important Alpine centre (4134 feet). Beautifully situated at the junction of the *Var* and the *Bourdou*, in a rich and green countryside, *Entraunes* offers its visitors an ample variety of walks and climbs. It is a convenient starting point for the difficult ascents of the *Aiguilles de Pélen*s (8809 feet), the *Tête de l'Encombrette* (9289 feet), the *Roche Grande* (9024 feet), the *Cime de l'Aspre* and so on. One can also reach the *Col des Champs* towards *Colmars*, or go by the *Col de Pal* towards *St-Etienne-de-Tinée*, which is becoming more and more popular.

Above *Entraunes* the valley becomes steeper and the road makes many windings to gain the high terrace of the hamlet of *Villard*; it then



*Church of St. Martin-d'Entraunes :
Altarpiece by Bréa.*

crosses to the left bank by the Pont de Crouas, and runs along beside a beautiful larch forest; then by the Pont St-Roch it returns to the right bank where it describes a wide curve to rise above the waterfalls and rapids of the Var. Skirting the chalets of *St-Saveur* or *Esteng-le-Bas*, we see to the West, the high and impressive waterfall of the Eiglière, which flows from the Grand Tour of the Lake of Allos.

The road, in continuing to ascend, touches the village of *Esteng* (5838 feet), terraced on the northern slope of a grassy hill. This is the highest village occupied all the year round in this region, but only consists of about a dozen houses. We pass another larch wood, the last on this side, and then, near the *Chapelle de la*

Trinité (5867 feet), we enter on a pastoral region. The view becomes more extensive, and, for the Alpinist, more interesting. One catches wonderful glimpses of the great rocks which surround the top of the valley.

Here and there valleys branch out to right and left, each bringing its tributary to the central stream; at the height of 5900 feet, we come to the rivulet supposed to be the source of the Var. In a fold at the foot of the Tête de Gorgias, this little stream, the Garret, joins the Colombier, which runs down by the Col de Sanguinières (7520 feet) and is enlarged by another considerable stream near the chalets of Sanguinières. The path which leads to this Col, opens up between the Tête de la Sangui-

nières and the Pic (8899 feet), and is another route to Bayasse. The road, on the other hand, winds through the valley of the Garret; the landscape becomes wilder and more barren and presently we arrive at the *Col de la Cayolle* (7717 feet).

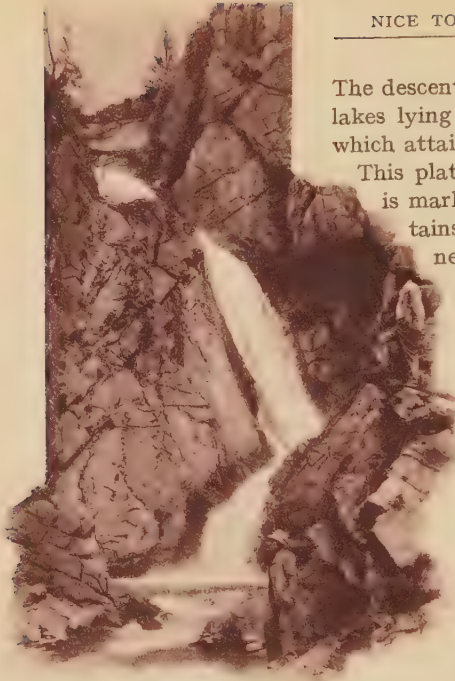
This rocky depression between the Sommet du Garret and the Eschillon (8890 feet) opens on to the arête which separates the basin of the Var from that of the Ubaye, and towards the south one has a very varied view extending to the neighbourhood of Guillaumes and Daluis. The outlook to the north is more limited and only extends to the rocky plain terminated by the peaks of the Chevalier (9477 feet) and the Cairbrun (9276 feet).

The road descends through this region and takes the traveller quickly down in a few steep windings. In the course of the journey a view to the left, between the Sommet du Garret and Mont Pelat, shows the dip of the Col de la Petite Cayolle (8665 feet) which leads to Allos by the Chadoulin valley.

The crests gradually rise above us, the rocks give place to meadowland, and the road, keeping always to its general northerly direction, passes the Eschillon hut and comes to the chalets of Juise (6200 feet).



Entraunes.



A Waterfall of the Var.

from the Cimet (9914) to the Pichs and the Cheval de Bois (9319 feet); that of the Nord, from the Signal de Ventebrun (9358 feet) to the Terres Pleines (9112 feet), the Col de Fours (7607 feet), the Chapeau de Gendarme (8814 feet), and the Pain de Sucre (8407 feet).

On leaving Bayasse, the valley, with the road on its right bank, begins to turn west wards; we pass numerous hamlets, Cordiers, Bel-lons, Dauriers, Ricouds, Longs, Girards, Maurels, till we come

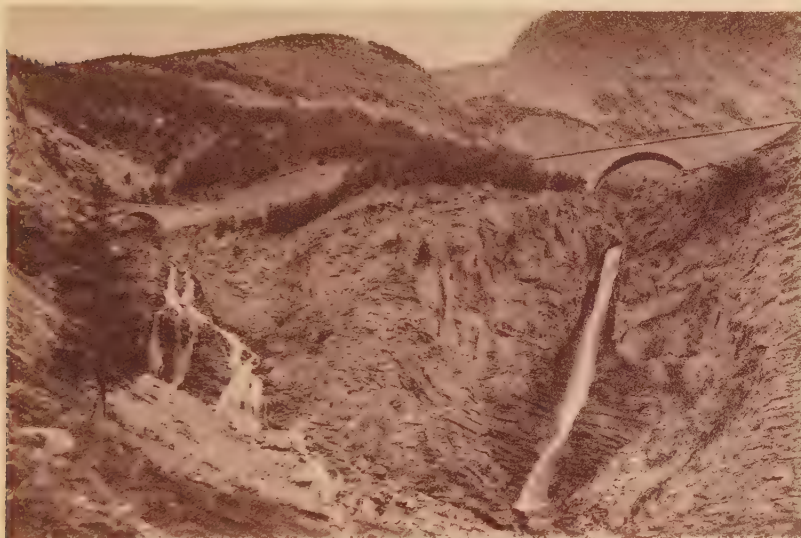
Source of the Var.

The descent is across grassy hills, with little lakes lying in their folds at the foot of crests which attain an average height of 9185 feet.

This plateau of the valley of the Bachelard, is marked by the austerity of high mountains regions, and when one comes, near the village of Bayasse, to the point where the ravine coming from the Col de la Moustière joins that of the Cayolle, one experiences a feeling of relief at the sight of their sparse vegetation.

This upper valley of the Bachelard, embracing that of the Tinée and near that of the Lauzanie, is situated in one of the most mountainous regions of the whole Alpine Chain, not far from the frontier peak of Enchastraye (9696 feet), and the greatest heights of the Maritime Alps. The valley which leads from it, is held as in a vice between two high parallel walls, that of the Midi, stretching





Waterfall of Bachelard.

to the capital of the commune, *Fours-Saint-Laurent* (5446 feet).

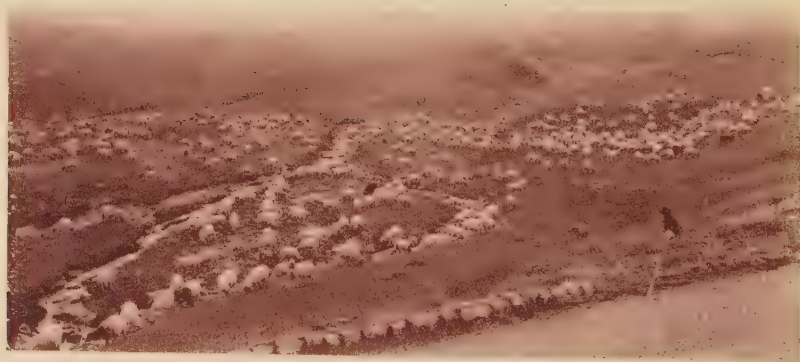
Still on the slopes of the northern chain, the road runs below Villard des Arnauds and past Villard d'Abas; then the belt of cultivation comes to an end, we enter a narrow valley where the slopes are covered with trees right down to the water's edge. After rounding the base of the Pain de Sucre, the gorge again takes a northerly direction. High up on the left bank we see the track over the Col d'Allos, then the road comes down to the level of the torrent, and at the village of *Uvernet* (3968 feet) again enters on a cultivated region.

Two kilometers further on, at the junction of the Allos road, we come out into the smiling valley of the Ubaye. Two kilometers more over a level road, take us to a bridge over the Ubaye and thence to the little town of *Barcelonnette* (3717 feet).

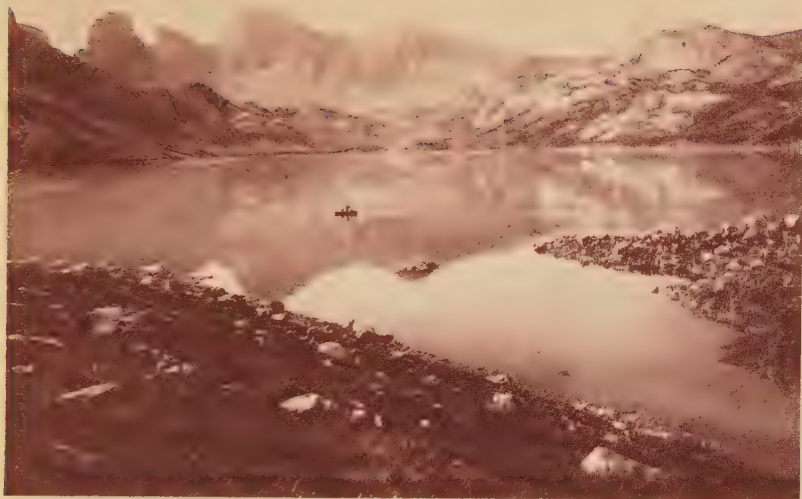
The last of the *Sous-Préfectures* of France not yet marred by the railway, *Barcelonnette* has none of that melancholy aspect so characteristic of many little mountain cities. Well protected from the north winds by the bastions of the *Grande Épervière* (7837 feet), it spreads out towards the south, basking in light and sunshine and enjoying a much more temperate climate than one might expect from its altitude. It is in fact a



little Provence. It has many handsome villas, for the sons of this soil emigrate freely. Monsieur E. Chabrand's fine book : *Les Barcelonnettes au Mexique* tells us of their perseverance thanks to which prosperous commercial houses have been founded, whose enriched Directors return to spend their well-earned fortunes in the town which gave them birth.



Sheep on the Col de la Cayolle.



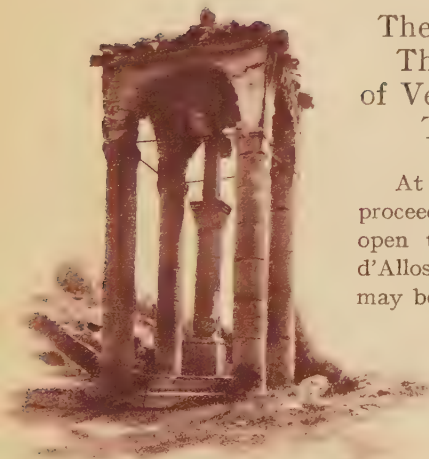
Lake Allos.

CHAPTER IV

AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

The Gorges of the Vaire - Annot -
 The Col St. Michel - The Valley
 of Verdon, Beauvezer and Colmars -
 The Col and Lake of Allos.

At the beginning the Route des Alpes did not proceed via the Col de la Cayolle which was not open to motor traffic. Its way was by the Col d'Allos and the journey is not without interest and may be used as a variation. At the bridge of Guedan we leave the high valley of the Var to the right and continue to ascend the valley of the Vaire in a Westerly direction. The Sud-France line rejoins



The Cross at Annot.

the Route and both traverse the very narrow and picturesque defiles.

At the valley of Scaffarels the route branches off from Digne via the Col de Toutes Aures and is usually used in winter when the cold interferes with the passage of the great Cols.

At the end of the Gorge is the town of Annot (2060 feet) which is entirely situated on the left bank of the Vaire and stretches to the base of the mountain which is covered with magnificent chestnut trees and huge sandstone rocks. The town is very interesting and the old part is full of houses dating from the twelfth century, and there is also a covered cross which is now classed as a historic monument. The route proceeds through a very wooded region and winding upwards it reaches the base

of the Col at 4941 feet where we come upon the little village of Col St. Michel.

Here we stop to see the panorama which is almost circular and gives a wide view over the arc of Peyresq. The route descends and crosses the Verdon; after passing through a narrow gorge it emerges on to the verdant plain of Beauvezer (3940 feet) in which lie several hamlets.

At the foot of the hill is a great hotel in the midst of a lovely park and in the little square may be found several pensions. This part of the Verdon valley is very popular as a summer resort.



Annot.



Panorama of the Col d'Allos. Looking North.

In the lower portion of this valley lie concealed the most picturesque gorges popularised by the well known explorer E.-A. Martel who called them the Cañon of Verdon.

The village of Riez situated in the high valley of the Verdon boasts the remains of an antique monument composed of Corinthian Columns.

From Beauvezer the route proceeds to Colmars a small town surrounded by ramparts having at its base the Fort de France and above the Fort de Savoie. On ascending the left bank of the Verdon we reach Allos well known to Alpinists.

Situated at an altitude of 4675 feet in the buttress which separates the confluents of the Boucher and the Chadoulin with the Verdon, Allos has become well known on account of its lake and Col.

Being the headquarters of the « Syndicat d'initiative » of Haut Verdon it has become the centre for tourists. A shelter has been built on the banks of the lake : from thence ascents can be made of the Trois Evêchés (9517 feet) the Grande Séolane (9517 feet) the Cheval de Bois (8914 feet) Mont Pelet (9958 feet) and others.

The lake of Allos is some 600 meters wide and $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers long. It abounds in fish and possesses two small islands. Its still green waters lie at an altitude of 7341 feet in a glacial hollow through which it flows



Colmars : Fort de Savoie.

without apparent movement to feed the source of the Chadoulin. The surrounding hills at the foot of the escarpment are enchanting. From here may be seen the Petites and the Grandes Tours (8465 feet) and we can proceed to Entraunes via the Pass of Lausson (8561 feet).

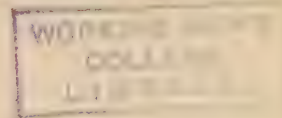
The visit to the lake of the Allos returning by the valley of the Chadoulin takes five hours but we can well enjoy it for a whole day.

Upstream from Allos the valley inclines to the north-west, becoming more and more pastoral. Still on the left bank of the Verdon, the road passes through the villages of La Baumette, La Baume, and la Foux and comes at last to the chalets of *La Sestrière* which lie surrounded by meadows at the top of the valley. The limestone heights of the Trois Evêchés and the Sestrière (8261 feet) rise above it and form a barrier which the road circumvents towards the north-west, by winding up the pastures to the Col d'Allos or Valgelaye (7382 feet) leading to the valley of the Ubaye.

The view from the Col itself is much shut in, but on climbing the hill which bounds it to the south, one can enjoy a marvellous panorama which includes, towards the north, the magnificent peaks of the Haute Ubaye du Queyras and the Briançonnais.



The Columns of Riez.



The descent, which begins in a northerly direction, soon brings us to a great building, the *Refuge du Col*, intended by the cantonal authorities to provide shelter and refreshment for poor emigrants. The road then winds across the vast and luxuriant meadows of the northern slope.

One soon comes in sight of the deep ravine of the Bachelard which opens up on the right and one distinguishes the road across the Col de la Cayolle, winding across the slopes of the Pain de Sucre.

A great circular depression on the eastern flank of the Séolane necessitates a wide détour towards *Les Agneliers*, then the descent again takes a northerly direction. The road sinks deeper and deeper into the *Clue* of the Bachelard, and above Uvernet returns to cultivated regions in the plateau on which the hamlets of Rousset, Forest, and Prieur are situated. At Pied la Maure we arrive again at the level of the Bachelard which we cross to rejoin the Cayolle road. Following it we come out into the valley of the Ubaye and soon reach *Barcelonnette* on the right bank (160 kilometers).



La Foux.



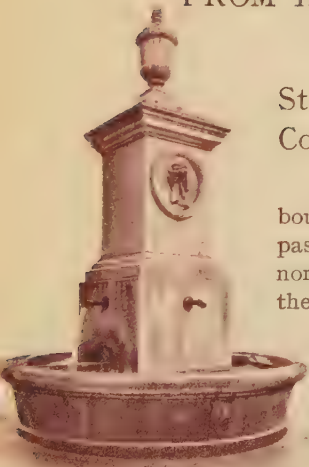
A Street in Barcelonnette.

CHAPTER V

FROM BARCELONNETTE TO BRIANÇON

St. Paul-sur-Ubaye and Condamine - The Col de Larche - The Col de Vars - Guillestre.

Barcelonnette lies in a cheerful and smiling neighbourhood in the pretty valley of the Ubaye. The road passes through fine properties and fertile country in a north-easterly direction towards Jausiers which lies at the upper extremity of the plain (4058 feet). The Ubaye receives the torrent of the Granges Communes there on its left bank, flowing from a valley which runs South-East to the Col des Granges Communes, and connecting at the Col de Pelouse with Bouzièyas and St-Dalmas-le-Selvage in the valley of the Tinée.



Fountain and Bust of Manuel.



Larche and the Col de Larche.

We have hitherto followed an East-North-East direction, but now the valley contracts, the slopes draw nearer each other, and, still keeping to the right bank of the torrent, we enter a Pass which points more directly to the North.

This district is very shut in, the slopes on each side are covered with forests and there is only a narrow cultivated belt by the river bank.

But the further we advance, the more the panorama opens out. The mountains seem to move away, and we emerge on to the little plain of Condamine (4290 feet). To the East the horizon is bounded by the steep slopes of the Tête de Cuguret; to the West we see the strategic route of the Col du Parpaillon (9194 feet) foreshortened on its way to Embrun; facing us on the slope we see the terraced hamlet of *Tournoux*.

This slope is cut to

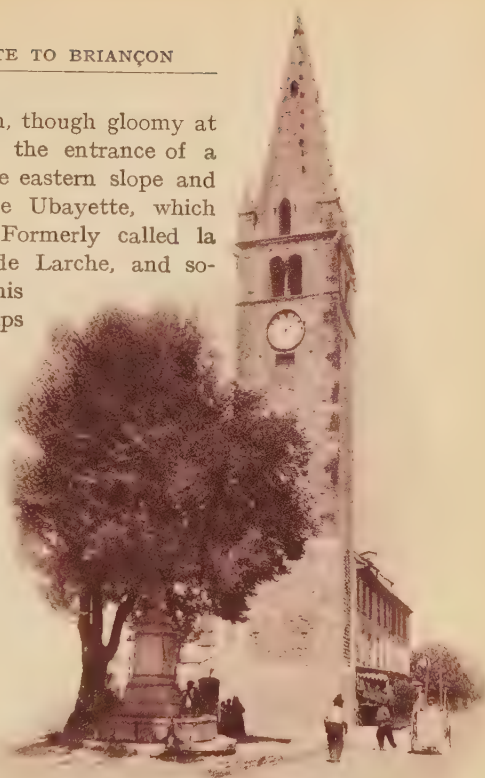


Shelter on the Col de Larche.

the North-East by a high valley which, though gloomy at first, is enlarged and brightened by the entrance of a sunny pastoral side-valley dividing the eastern slope and bringing the Ubaye the waters of the Ubayette, which flow down from the *Col de Larche*. Formerly called la Madeleine, now known as the Col de Larche, and sometimes as the Col de l'Argentière, this Pass, which is the lowest in the Alps (6545 feet), has played an important part in international relations. Already known and used in the time of the Romans, it is mentioned in four crossings of the Alps described by Strabo. It is still the most important route between the Col di Tenda and that of Mont Genève, and is the connecting link between the valley of Barcelonnette and that of Demonte and Coni or Cuneo, on the other side of the Maritime Alps.

Often trod by armies, it saw Pompey's legions pass, and was perhaps followed by Asdrubal when he went to the help of his brother. It was used by Francis Ist and by the soldiers of the xviiith and xviiith centuries. From its summit (6536 feet), a road leads down into Piédmont, to the little city of Argentera at the source of the Stura; it then continues past Bagni di Vinadio, Demonte and Borgo, San Dalmazzo as far as Coni, in the valley of the Po at the foot of the Col di Tenda. It makes a magnificent round to motor from Nice and return by the Cols of Argentera and Tenda.

From the climber's point of view the valley of the Ubayette, where one can make one's headquarters at the village of Larche (5570), is an excellent centre for the ascent of the Tête de Sautron (10,390 feet), the Tête de Moïse (10,205 feet), or Oronaye (from which the panorama extends as far as Mont Viso), or of the Pic de l'Enchastraye (9699 feet) which commands the whole Maritime Alps. Less ambitious climbers can visit the Cols of Sautron (7990 feet), and of Moïse (8351 feet), the



The Belfry of Barcelonnette.

Tête de Viraysse (9104 feet) and that of Villadel, the Lakes of Oronaye (7898 feet) of Viraysse, Lauzanier, Parassas, Ruburent, etc.

Beyond the junction where the road to the Col de Larche branches off to the East, the *Route des Alpes* crosses the Ubayette but soon recrosses again by the Pont de Gleyzolle to the right side of the valley. It passes the hamlet of Tournoux on a height to the right; then a Pass, narrower and wilder than any it has yet traversed, closes in front of it. Coming back for a moment to the left bank by the Pont de la Fortune, it traverses the *Pas de la Reyssole*, balancing itself on the edge of an abyss before emerging on the little plain of St. Paul. Its general direction has hitherto been northerly; it now swerves sharply to the East to reach the village of *St-Paul-sur-Ubaye* (4823 feet).

The plain commanded by this village lies at the junction of the valley of Rioumonal with the Upper valley of the Ubaye.

The latter inclines to the North-East along the frontier chain and soon finds itself hemmed in and almost crushed between that chain, which separates it from Piédmont, and the chain of Panestrel and Font Sancte, which dominate the valleys of Escreins and Ceillac. High peaks, abound and if only Maljasset, the headquarters of the parish of Maurin had proper accommodation for visitors, it

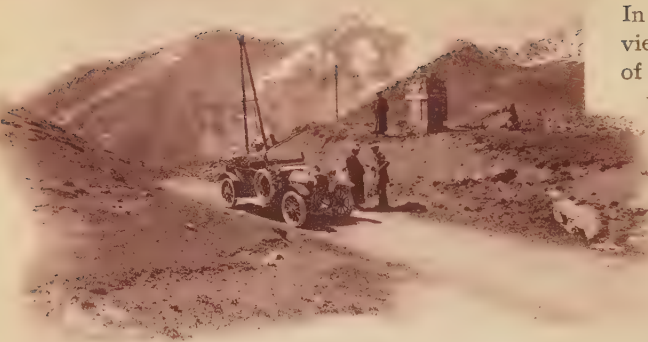


Route of the Col de Vars. Campanile de Faucon.

*Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye.*

would be a wonderful Alpine centre. The Brec de Chambeyron (11,116 feet), the Aiguille de Chambeyron (11,185 feet), the Pointe Haut de Mary, the Grand Rubren (10,962 feet), the Pointe de la Font Sancte (11,057), the Pointe de Panestrel (10,673 feet) the Tête de Paneyron (9143 feet) with the Cols of Stropia, Gippiera, Marinnet, Mary, Rubren and Longet towards Italy; and the Cols of Albert, Tronchet (8747 feet), Girardin (8855 feet), towards Ceillac — all these form an Alpine field of the first rank, which is unfortunately no better served on the Italian side by the primitive accomodation of Prazzo, Bellino and Chianale.

But motors cannot venture into that austere region and a sudden turn to the left takes us up the side valley of Rioumonal which runs in a north-westerly direction towards the Col de Vars. The gradient soon gets steeper, and the road is cleverly engineered over the sparse cultivation of this region. Though we are here among the high mountains, the slope lies exposed to the sun, and the horizon, at first shut in, soon opens out. A little forest covers the opposite side of the valley. We soon reach the village of Le Mélézin, and while passing through the cultivation of this pastoral district, see the giants of the frontier chain rise above the hills which enclose the valley. The Brec de Chambeyron, the dominating height, is most impressive with its icy ramparts and precipitous cliffs.



The Col de Vars.

In another direction the view extends to the valley of the Ubayette. By a wide loop to the left, the road climbs up into a high valley and loses sight of the basin of the Rioumonal; a turn to the right brings us nearer of the crests which block the view, and about 8 kilometers from St. Paul we

arrive at the *Col de Vars* (6939 feet).

A monument records that the road was made in 1891 by Alpine troops. The surrounding rock is of a melancholy blackish colour and we gladly hurry on to the descent, which lies due North. To the left, the waters gather in a deep depression to form a wild and lonely Lake. Towards the North we see the peaks of the Queyras and even the glaciers of Pelvoux. We emerge from a rocky gorge on to a grassy plateau, which is marshy in places, and arrive at the Refuge of the Col de Vars (6560). This large building, intended as a Hospice for travellers overtaken by the storm, is one of the six *Refuges Napoléon*, erected in the Alps in obedience to a clause in the will of Napoleon I. His bequest was not given effect to till 1854, and now a wave of ill-considered economy has led to these Refuges being abandoned; those of the Col Agnel and the Col de la Croix are to be taken down.

On leaving the Refuge, the road runs westwards for a short distance then resumes its northerly direction on entering a beauti-



Ste-Marie-de-Vars.



Guillestre and the Col de Vars.

ful larch forest. After winding through a picturesque region, we come to the hamlet of Sainte-Marie-de-Vars (5429), where we begin to enjoy a splendid panorama. The ridges to the right, which enclose the valley of Escreins, are merely a setting, for the mass of the Furfande which faces us displays the marvellous glories of the peaks of the Catinat, the Aiguilles du Ratier, the Pic de Béal Traversier, the Jalon, Jambe Route, Maravoise,

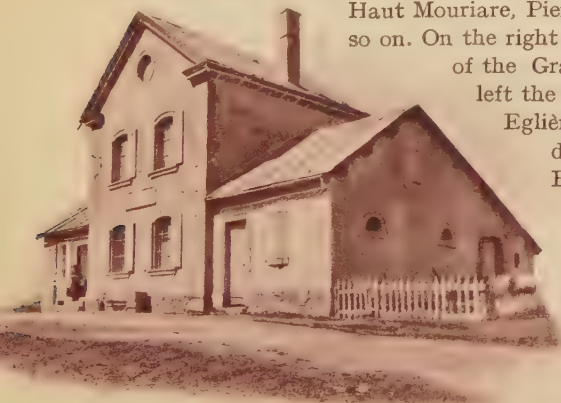
Haut Mouriare, Pierre Eyrautz, Clot la Cime and so on. On the right we have the sparkling pyramid

of the Grand Rochebrune, and on the left the snowy heights of Pelvoux, the

Eglière, the Ailefroide, Mont Salvador Guillemain, Grand Pelvoux,

Barre des Ecrins, Pic de Neige, Cordier, Séguret Foran, etc.

All the way to the village of Vars (5450 feet) one's vision is entranced by the sight of these clear but



Shelter on the Col de Vars.

ethereal heights on the far horizon. Then the descent begins again, down on to a spur which separates the valley of the Rioubel (Escreins) from



Porch of the Church at Guillestre.

the wide valley of the Chagne. The road is a succession of steep and giddy windings but the docile motor whirls us quickly down. The spur appears to grow larger, the rich cultivation of the valley draws nearer, one can make out Mont Dauphin on its rock, and crossing the Rioubel, the car runs into the old town of *Guillestre* (3250 feet, 50 kilometers from Barcelonnette).

An etymology more piquant than assured, derives the name of this market-centre of the Queyras, from its position beyond the Guil, *Guil*

extra. Of ancient origin, Guillestre was a stronghold in the Middle Ages, surrounded by walls whose tight embrace prevented its growth. The inhabitants of the neighbouring district flocked to it for security, and as there was no space within the walls, the houses crowded together, robbing each other of light and air. In modern times, the walls were knocked down, one only sees vestiges of them here and there, but the streets

remain dark and narrow, and the road, instead of venturing into the city, circles round it on the site of the ancient ramparts.

The jewel of Guillestre is its church, a beautiful xvth century building, whose porch is supported by sandstone pillars borne by crouching lions. This symbolism of Force supporting Faith, an imitation of the Cathedral of Embrun, is found in nearly all the churches of the Queyras. One notices also a little monumental fountain in the square, in memory of General Albert, a native of Guillestre.

From Guillestre a short descent of about 4 kilometers takes us down to the level of the Durance and we could continue our journey along its banks. But this road, although not devoid of interest, did not recommend itself to the engineers of the *Route des Alpes*, because it did not embrace one of the most beautiful districts of these mountains, the wonderful valley of the Queyras, which it would have been unpardonable to pass by.



Route of the Col de Vars. Windings of Peyre-Haute.

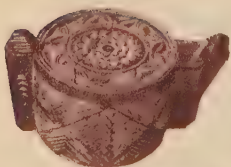


Château Queyras.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMBES DU QUEYRAS

The valley of the Guil - Château Queyras - Aiguilles -
Abriès - The region of the Viso - The Casse Déserte
and the Col Izoard - The valley of
Cervièrès - The Bacchu-Ber



The inaccessibility of the Queyras is a problem which has excited much attention. This important region occupies, at an average height of 4923 feet, that vast district formed by the basin of the Guil and its affluents, and is surrounded on all sides by steep ramparts. As outlet it has only one narrow fissure, cut by the age-long action of the torrent on the thick barrier of limestone and quartz. Its earliest inhabitants had no egress save over the Passes, more than 6560 feet in height. The Roman conquerors established a route over the Passes, and it was not till the

Wood Salt-cellars of Haut-Queyras.

Middle Ages, that an attempt was made to follow the course of the stream; in 1507, Jacques Signot announced that after fifteen attempts he had succeeded in negotiating a passage by the side of the torrent.

This route, by the foot of the valley was gradually improved; the great difficulty was where the Durance comes out on to the plain, for the escarpments there were impassable. They were evaded by following the Chagne and crossing the Col of the Viste, which involved a very steep descent (les Tourniquets) to the valley where the Guil and the Cristillan meet. It was not till comparatively recent times, the beginning of the xxth century, that engineering feats allowed the road to avoid the Viste and approach the magnificent defile on the level. But the service of the market of Guillestre still imposes a wide detour.



Gorges du Guil, near Ange Gardien.

On leaving Guillestre the road describes two wide curves across the luxuriant valley of the Chagne, then, by a tunnel, passes through a shoulder of the Viste, to a terrace overhanging the abysses of the Guil. A wild and barren stretch, hewn out of the rock, facing another equally savage rock-face, traverses the gulley and leads to the little terrace where one finds the Maison du Roi and where the ancien *Tourniquets* join the new road.

The Hotel, ridiculously disguised under this pretentious name, boasts a franchise granted it by King Louis XIII, in recognition of its hospitality; it possesses, in proof, an old painting of three fleurs de lys with the legend *Sauvegarde du Roy*. We should not question these legends too closely, for they preserve the "flavour" of the district; but historians insist, that if the troops of Louis XIII passed through the Queyras to fight in Italy, they went by the Mont-Cenis.

A few steps from the Maison du Roi, the road crosses the Cristillan, a powerful torrent which flows through the picturesque but deserted *Vallée de Ceillac*; we pass the road which runs up it on the right. There is a controversial question as to whether the Ceillac is part of the Queyras

or not. It is of no practical interest, but though the Ceillac may not be included in the special organisation of the *Escarions*, who regulate the laws of this Queyrassian republic, from a physical and geological point of view it cannot be separated from the rest of the basin of the Guil.

A slight turn to the left brings us to the first of 15 bridges, and on the right bank we enter the famous *Combe du Queyras*. During a run of 10 kilometers we pass through a veritably enchanted land. The limestone pre-



The Valley of the Guil.

*Valley of the Chapelue.*

cipices overhanging this narrow gorge vary from 492 to 1312 feet in height. They have remained practically vertical most of the way, so that every turn in this gulley presents a new picture as marvellous as those which preceded it. The separate elements of the landscape are the same as those of all the gorges of the Alps, a happy alliance of rocks, water, trees and vegetation, but here the rocks are more warmly coloured, and more varied and the absolute limpidity of the water has that bluish tinge which gives the Queyras its other title, *Val d'Azur*. The vegetation is sombre, but the pines alternate here and there with the softer verdure of the larches, which add a fresh and pleasing note to the whole.

For reasons of safety the road runs sometimes on one bank, sometimes on the other and arrives at the hamlet of *Le Veyer* where the valley broadens out. On the right bank a steep road runs up a wooded ravine to the village of *Les Escoyères* (5080 feet), a former centre of the Roman occupation. On the left bank, a vast wooded hollow, leads to the village of Montbardon, to the Chapel of Sainte-Arsène and to the meadows of the Col Fromage.

Then the view suddenly closes in, in the Pass of *La Chapelue*, a narrow fissure between two gigantic rocks, through which one catches a glimpse of the graceful Aiguille du Pic de Rochebrune.



Château Queyras.

Up stream from this defile, one sees the Guil writhing and twisting between the rocks in a curious way which attracts all photographers. Then the Pass demands our attention again; it is even more densely wooded here and we follow it to the Roc de l'Ange Gardien, that giant sentinel which bars the valley and where the l'Eau d'Arvieux joins the Guil.

The Guil flows through a narrow opening between the Ange Gardien and the left bank of the valley; the l'Eau d'Arvieux runs down the right side and the road follows it, in a great loop which carries it up to the heights. This is the end of the *Combe*; the plateau of the Queyras opens out before us the outline of its powerful fortress in the foreground.

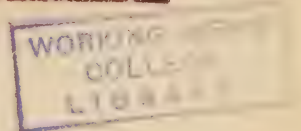
The road has hardly passed over the little Col which connects the Ange Gardien with the right side of the valley, when it comes to the

A House in Haut-Queyras.



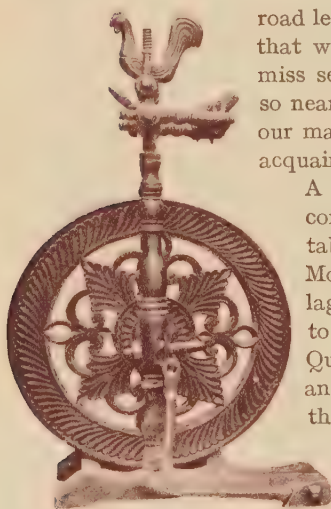


Fort Queyras.





Interior of a House at Saint-Véran.



*A Spinning-wheel
of Haut-Queyras.*

road leading to the Col d'Izoard (7835 feet). It is by it that we go on, but it would be a grave mistake to miss seeing the beauties of this neighbourhood now so near at hand, and so, making a short *détour* from our main route, we turn to the right, to improve our acquaintance with the Upper Valley of the Queyras.

A few minutes take us to Castle Queyras, whose commanding and picturesque aspect is unforgettable. The road traverses a hollow at the foot of Mont Soulier, it then passes through a little village built in the shelter of the Fort and comes to a wide and richly cultivated tract, the Haut-Queyras. A little further on we reach the most ancient village of this region, *Ville-Vieille*, where the valley of Molines opens out towards the south, running up to Fontgillarde to Col Agnel and to Saint Véran, the highest village in France (6693 feet).

After that a slight descent through the mi-



*Wood Carving of
Haut-Queyras.*

som into abundance. Seeing that snow covered the ground for long months in winter, and no work was possible, many of the natives of the Queyras emigrated. It is many years since natives of Aiguilles first emigrated to South America. They founded prosperous businesses in Brazil and the Argentine, which, after they had made their fortunes, they handed over to a son, a brother, a nephew or a cousin.



*Marriage Chests from
Haut-Queyras.*

nature gorges of the Guil, take us to the administrative capital of the district, the large city of *Aiguilles*, situated at the confluence of the Guil and the Lombard.

The character of this city is curious. At an altitude of about 4832 feet, one generally finds rather poor houses in the Alps. But here we find ourselves in a veritable little city, a girdle of pretty villas forming a ring of luxury right round it.

The activity of the natives has made an excess of misery blossom

Wishing to attract the attention of travellers, this important centre erected near the banks of the Guil — which has now settled down into a calm and sensible river — a large Hotel, where the motors of the *Route des Alpes* put in for lunch.

Six kilometres through a long narrow valley, bring us to *Abriès*, the tourist capital of the district.



*Chain carved from
solid wood.*

Lying at the foot of the frontier chain which culminates in the famous Pelvas (9633), Abriès is situated at the intersection of the valleys of the Roux and Haut Guil which run up, diverging from each other, into this chain.



Abriès.

The northern valley of the Roux, drained by the Bouchet, leads to the charming district of Valprévère on the other side of Pelvas; to Bric Bouchet, an arduous climb of 9853 feet; to Bric-Froid (10,860 feet) and even to the Grand Glaisa (10,781 feet.) It connects with the Piedmontese valley of Bobbio, Terre Pellice and Pinerolo by the Cols of Urine, Malaure and Bouchet, and with the valley of Cesana Torinese by the Cols of Mayt and Turre. All this part is full of beauty, notably the Bois Noir, Bois de l'Issartin and the Bois de Manozel.

Alpinists find excellent quarters at the Hotel of Abriès (5095

feet), always crowded during the season by those anxious to climb the peaks which surround the valley of Haut Guil, and especially those towards the imposing mass of Mont Viso (12,602 feet), which, even though actually in Italy, is by its pre-eminence, the Monarch of all the mountains of this district.

The carriage road extends about a dozen kilometres beyond Abriès and serves the villages of *Ristolas* and *La Monta* and even runs on beyond



Mont Viso at Sunset.

L'Échalp, on the left bank of the Guil. The ascent of the Pic de Ségure (9836 feet) which is made from near there, is the favourite expedition for summer visitors. This summit, which is reached without great effort, gives a semi-circular view of the frontier chain. A little further off, La Monta stands at the end of the bridle path to the *Col de la Croix*, much used by the natives of Bobbio, who bring their produce by that route to the important market of Abriès. The constant traffic over this difficult route has aroused considerable feeling in favour of making a motor road across this Pass, 7576 feet in height. Desirable from a local point of view, such a road would encourage travellers to visit the Haut-Queyras which would no longer be a *cul-de-sac*.

L'Échalp (5963 feet) is the last village of the cultivated region; we then come to a fine belt of trees which have fortunately been spared the axe. Crossing the Guil by a curious wooden bridge, we climb up by a bridle path to the famous *Alpe de la Médille*, a vast and peaceful pasture from which we can admire the magnificent mass of Mont Viso at our ease. Climbing still higher new beauties are unfolded before us on the shores of Lake Égorgéou, Lake Baricle and the wild Lake of Foréant.



La Monta.

We could reach the *Col Vieux* (8983 feet) by this path, and from it the *Col Agnel* (8860 feet) with its descent towards the Chianale and Val Varaita.

But if we continue up the Guil, we soon come to a site of real grandeur where the chalets of *Ruines* are grouped at the foot of the *Rocher Écroulé*. One would think this an impasse, for precipitous cliffs with twisted pines clinging to them, seem to surround us on all sides and bar the way. It is by the edge of the narrow passage cut by the Guil that we evade them and reach a high, open basin lying enclosed in an arena of splendid peaks. From a height near the ancient *Refuge des Lyonnais*, one sees the crests of the Traversette, the Rochers Punta Gastaldi, the



La Monta : A Watering-place.



Haut-Queyras : L'Echalp.

depression of the Col Vallante dominated by the majestic breadth of Mont Viso, the arête of Pointe Joanne, the slopes of the Grande Aiguillette and the cone of Pointe d'Asti. The Guil meanders at our feet through the bed of an ancient lake, to right and left some old larches mark the limit of the tree level. The whole impression of the place is unforgettable.

Two much frequented roads to the valleys of Piémont, branch off here; facing us, up past the rapids of the Guil and past Lake Lestio in which it takes its rise, is the road to the *Col Vallante* (9269 feet) which leads to Casteldelfino. To the left the path to the *Col de la Traversette*, Pian del Re, Crissolo and Saluzzo branches off. Much more used than the Col Vallante, this route has for many centuries avoided the painful climb at the end of the Col by the curious tunnel called the *Trou de la Traversette* or the *Bouche du Viso* (9679 feet). Opened up by pick and chisel in 1480 this subterranean passage, 240 feet long by 7 feet high, has often been intentionally closed in time of war, accidentally by snow-storms. It was reopened in 1906, thanks to the financial help of the *Touring Club of France*, which in co-operation with the *Alpine Club of France*, erected the *Refuge Ballif-Viso*. An artery of communication has thus been established over this exciting route between the rich district of Saluzzo and the heart of the Alps. The road, which is kept in good order, offers

*La Casse Déserte.*

tourists and Alpinists easy access to these mountains, to the sources of the Po and to the ascent of Mont Viso.

After this rapid survey of the beauties of the Queyras, we will go back to Ange Gardien and proceed up the neighbouring valley of the Arvieux. We soon come to the capital of the Commune, where we must not omit to see the carved porch and the Roman tower of the old church (5105 feet). The valley, at first very hilly, soon widens out and settles down; the hamlets we pass through, Coin and La Chalpe, have an air of plenty, and soon we come to the highest village, Brunissard (5850 feet), just below the heights closing in the top of the valley. The torrent here comes out of a perfect labyrinth of mountains, Pic de Maravoise, Pic de Chabriller, Pic de Balar and so on from its source at the foot of the *Col de Néal* (8300 feet).

Not long ago the bridle path took the western flank of the *Pic de la Colline* to gain the *Col d'Izoard*. The road, now more carefully laid out, describes numerous curves in the course of which one enjoys a magnificent view of the valley of the Arvieux, the mountains which enclose it and away beyond the Guil to the crests of the valleys of Ceillac and Ubaye. Then, after climbing up a wooded buttress one finds



Route in La Casse Déserte. Church of Arvieux. Upper Valley of Arvieux

*Brunissard.*

oneself in strange surroundings. The whole mountain side is one immense and crumbling slope of stones. From the striking rocks at the summit right down to the depths of the valley we see nothing but one vast stretch of rock and stones. Robbed of its protective covering the rock, of magnesian nature, has been profoundly affected by the elements. Fissured and cracked, it breaks off by its own weight, its fall precipitated by the heavy rains. Is the abomination of desolation, the agony of the mountain. The ceaseless avalanche of stones has razed the forest to the ground, only a few stunted trees remain. Here and there rocks of greater resisting power form towers and Aiguilles. The road has cut a passage through this melancholy chaos which is known as the *Casse Déserte* and it is with amazement, not unmixed with anxiety that we cross this extraordinary place.

We soon come again to vegetation and the beginning of the *Col d'Izoard* (7835 feet). Its situation in the axis of the valley of Arvieux gives it a wide view and its height allows it to look out over a sea of grassy and wooded hills to the far end of the valley of Névache, to the Aiguille Noir and Mont Thabor. To the right we see high up on another slope, the Col Perdu which one follows for the ascent of the Grand Pic de Rochebrune (10,900 feet).

The *Refuge d'Izoard* greets us smilingly from a green hollow. Inhabited all the year round by a cantonal official, it serves as a hospice for travellers, who are numerous on this route even in winter. Known and used in very early times, this pass was called the *Col de Cervières* in 1622 and was the principal route to the Queyras before the opening of the *Route de la Combe*.

Not far from the Refuge the road enters the beautiful fir forest of Loubatières which extends all over the western side of the Pointe de Peygu. The road then curves along the brink of a ravine and arrives at the hamlet of *Le Laus* (5700 feet).

In the wider valley of the Blétonnet which runs down from the *Casse des Oules*, we follow the base of the stony slopes of Lasserrou or Seru (8871 feet) and soon reach the village of *Cervièrès* (4500 feet). Situated at the junction of the Blétonnet which comes from Rochebrun and the Cerveyrette which flows down the Grand Glayza, Cerveières, towards which a number of frontier passes converge, was formerly an important centre. Massed on the left bank of the torrent, it built its faubourg of Adret on the right bank with the beautiful chapel of St. Michel. But the constant falls of stones and debris covering its



La Casse Déserte.



Sketch seen from the Col Tenda.

fields and putting a stop to cultivation, discouraged many of its inhabitants who abandoned it, so that many of the houses are deserted or in ruins.

Crossing the Cervexrette the road runs along the valley, and passes through a picturesque countryside. The torrent breaks into rapids, the left bank is covered with trees, the atmosphere is indescent with the spray which rises from the river, the gorge gradually opens out and we see the glittering mass of Pelvaux in the distance. As we emerge on the valley of the Durance we pass the graceful bridge of Bally and the road to the fort of Croix de Bretagne; then while the river breaks into waterfalls to pour its waters into the Durance, the road makes a great curve over the slopes of Randonillet. Beyond Pont-Christiane, it comes to cross-roads, one branch goes down to the Pont de Cervières, while the other leads to the station of Briançon (4555 feet, 110 kilometers from Barcelonnette).

The village of *Pont de Cervières*, near the confluence of the Durance the Cervexrette, is notable for a curious traditional dance to be seen there, the *Baïla-baï*. A sort of pyrrhic or sword dance, its rhythm, trans-

mitted from generation to generation, is accompanied by a monotonous chant. Its origin is the cause of heated argument which has however had the happy result of saving it from that oblivion, into which, with the old costumes and legends of the provinces, it was about to disappear.

The peasants of the region are justly proud of their dances, so much so that they generally object to being photographed and on several occasions the production of my camera has had the effect of immediately stopping a dance. But there is little likelihood of this chance's continuing. The peasants are already beginning to show more willingness to dance at fêtes given by neighbouring provinces.

It is an interesting sight at a fête given at Lantaret to see the young dancers tripping it in the centre of a circle of richly clad "tarnes" who have come from the neighbouring valley of Maurienne to honour the fête. Let us hope for the continuance of these local gatherings so dear to the hearts of the natives and so picturesque to lovers of past tradition.



Le Bacchu-Ber.



Briançon.

CHAPTER VII

BRIANÇON AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

From Briançon to Grenoble. - The Col du Lautaret.
Oisans. - The Grave and the Meije. - Vizille and
its Castle. - Uriage-les-Bains.

It was natural that a town should spring up at the end of the Pass over Mont Genève, the earliest known route between Italy and Gaul. To safeguard their crossing by Mons Matriona, the Romans built a town there and called it *Brigantio*. It was an imposing situation, and France afterwards surrounded the houses which had gathered there in the shelter of the fortress, by a triple ring of walls. Later on military necessities demanded the erection of detached forts on the mountain, as high up as 7874 feet, and so Brigantio or Briançon, became an entrenched camp.

This town, built on a steep slope, whose upper quarters, the *Champ de Mars* and the *Porte de Pignerol* have a height of 4351 feet, looks down



Gateway of Briançon and Petite Gargouille.



Briançon: "Fontaine des Soupirs".

over the plain and the course of the Durance, from a great height. The suburb of Ste-Catherine lies near the river Guisanne, which flows into the Durance, near the P. L. M. railway station. A comfortable hotel adjoins it and from this centre various transport services radiate to the surrounding district. This suburb which developed at the expense of the town, where living was less convenient, has gradually become the real Briançon.

Situated in a net-work of valleys, between the frontier chain and the mass of Pelvoux, within reach of many interesting climbs, this region appeals to the alpinist. Besides the valley of the Cerveyrette which we



Andromeda : Bas relief at Briançon.

are about to pass through, and the valley of Guisanne by which we will leave this region, Briançon commands the attractive valley of the Névache traversed by the river Clairée. Branching off from the Haute-Durance at the foot of Mont Genève, covered with fresh green larch trees, it runs along the frontier chain as far as Mont Thabor. There are many delightful walks by the banks and falls of its river, but it is a cul-de-sac for carriages, only communicating with the neighbouring valleys of Savoy and Piémont by bridle-paths.

The *Route des Alpes*, on leaving Briançon, runs through the valley of the Guisanne to the Col du Lautaret. In this stretch of 20 kilometers, it first passes through *Monetier-de-Briançon*, now called *Monetier-les-Bains* (4862 feet), a little watering-place lying in a sylvan situation at the foot of the *Col de l'Eychauda* which leads into Vallouise. It next passes *Le Casset*, at the entrance of the valley of the *Petit-Tabuc*, which flows from the great glaciers of Casset and Monetier : then past the anthracite works of *Le Lauzet*, by a long detour round the base of the Grand Galibier,

it arrives at the Col, Hospice and Hotel of *Lautaret* (6757 feet).

The meadows of Lautaret were well known to botanists long before tourists discovered them. In the end of the XVIIIth century, Dominique Villars considered them the richest field in Dauphiny : last century, Grenier Mathonnet, Benoit Jayet and many others reaped wonderful harvests there and the University of Grenoble established an Alpine Garden for the conservation of rare plants. From this richly dowered spot and especially from the little height on which the Restaurant stands there is a lovely view of the Meije on one side, the Roche du Grand Galibier, the Pic de la Ponsonnière and its satellites, on the other.

In mounting still higher, to the summith of a cone of meadows which rise immediately to the north of the Col, one enlarges one's horizon considerably. Alpinists able to climb the steep slopes of the Pic de Combeynot to the south (10,351 feet) have an astounding panorama, a whole world of rocks and ice are spread around them. The peaks of Près-les-Fonds, the Montagne des Agneaux (12,023 feet), with its double summit, the crest of Lac Blanc, the Neige Cordier (11,854 feet), the jagged peaks of



Roman Sarcophagus.

*Monetier-les-Bains.*

Roche Fauris, the magnificent Barre des Ecrins (13,464 feet), the Roche d'Alvau, the Pic Bourcet, the crown of the Grande Ruine (12,353 feet), the enormous mass of the Pic Gaspard (12,737 feet), and the pointed needle of the Meije (13,065 feet) all these look as if suspended in mid air, above great seas of ice, the Glacier du Casset, Glacier d'Arsine, Glacier de la Plate des Agneaux, that of Cavales and so on. One looks down toward the south on the sources of the Romanche, and to the north to the mass of the Aiguilles d'Arves and Goléon, the peaks of the Maurienne, and in the far distance to the glittering heights of Mont Blanc.

From the Col du Lautaret a pleasant walk, much improved by the efforts of the Touring Club, leads to the Alp *du Villard d'Arène*, to a net work of high valleys and to the Col d'Arsine (7875) which runs through scenery of extraordinary grandeur to Casset.

Interesting in itself, the Col du Lautaret has considerable geographical importance. It is the link by which the mass of Pelvoux is connected to the buttresses of the dorsal chain of the Alps. As far as the Col de Manse, it is the only practicable pass between the basin of the Durance and that of the Isère. Towards the Maurienne, it is the point of departure for the route by the Col du Galibier. It has been much frequented from the ear-



La Meije seen from the Terraces.

WORKING MEN'S
COLLEGE
LIBRARY



Panorama of Briançon.

liest times. The Romans used it as their military road between Turin and Vienna, and, struck by the austerity of the region, they built a little temple (altaretum) to placate the gods of the mountains. Known for that reason as the *collis de altareto* as it was still designated in titles of the xith century its name was corrupted into the Col de l'Autaret, and finally to Lautaret.

From the Col, a stream flows down towards the Romanche, a tributary of the Drac, which is, in its turn, a tributary of the Isère. Even though, by a curious error, the official boundary of Oisans is some distance away, traditionally it begins here, and the *Route des Alpes*, anxious to pass through that lovely region willingly takes a westerly direction. Soon parted from the amazing luxuriance of these meadows and hemmed in between the base of the Trois Évêchés and the slopes of Alp-Richard (a spur of Combeynot) the road runs along the top of a precipice with the Romanche foaming in the ravine below. A sudden turn discloses the amphitheatre of glaciers from which the torrent flows and in a few minutes the heights of the Ecrins are topped by the Crêtes of Glacier Blanc. The waterfall of L'Ane-à-Falque gleams in the far



Panorama of Briançon.

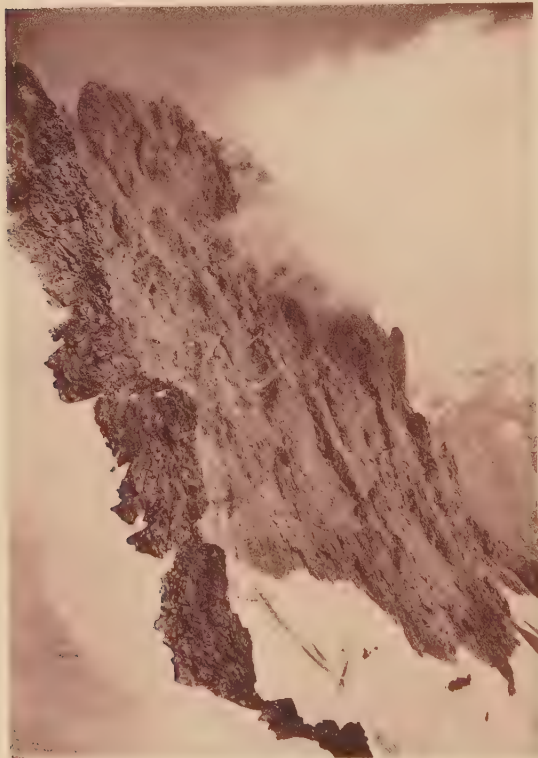
distance then disappears as the buttresses of the Meije close over it.

We descend rapidly through a contracting valley : on the right we pass the road to the pretty Lake of Pontet; on the left we are joined by a side road from the foot of the Col by another from the *Refuge de l'Alpe* (6821 feet) and from all those little Cols which surround the sources of the Romanche, Col Emil Pic, Col du Roche Faurio, Col du Pavé de la Casse Déserte, Col de la Grande Ruine, Col du Clot des Cavales, Col du Pavé and so on... But we are now drawing near *Le Villard-d'Arène*.

The ancient *Ecclesia de Arenis Superioribus*, this parish, standing at a height of 5417 feet, is the highest in the valley. The road does not enter it though passing close by : a wide curve then brings it to the opening of a long tunnel followed by a shorter one, which carry it through slopes of schist debris to *La Grave* (4862 feet) the capital of *Oisans Supérieur*. In the course of the descent we notice how this sloping plateau lies spread out to catch the sun. The villages of Ventelon, Pramélier, Hières and Terrasses lie at an average height of 6536 feet and are really suburbs of *La Grave* situated on roads leading to the Cols of Poléon, Lombard, Martignare etc. Alpinists set out from here for the ascents of the Signal de

Poléon (11,241 feet) the Bac de Grenier, Aiguilles d'Arves, Aiguilles de la Laussaz. Less ambitious climbers can visit the delightful plateau of *Prés-de-Paris* (7070 — 8038) beyond *Terrasses*, with its magnificent panorama of the Meidje, the Rateau, and the Glaciers of Mont de Lent.

The houses of Grave are terraced up the hill between the church with



The Slopes of the Gaspard Peak.

its Roman tower and the road where the two chief hotels are to be found; on their terraces one feels almost crushed by the colossal rampart of the Meije. The Grand Pic and the Pic Central, black, frowning and rugged contrast with the whiteness of the Meije orientale and stand out fiercely in the sky above the seracs of the glaciers of Meije and Tabuchet. In winter the sun disappears behind this mass at midday, and that was what led our forefathers to give the mountain the symbolic name of *l'Oeuille de la Meidjour* (l'Aiguille du Midi) now abbrevi-

ated into Meije. The appearance of these jagged, aerial heights, terrorises some spirits, inspires others. Since Whymper dared the first crossing of the *Brèche de la Meije* and Boileau of Castelnau climbed the great Aiguille (13,066 feet) many climbers have been intoxicated by the sublimity of these immense horizons but it is always a hazardous climb for which it is well to obtain the assistance of guides with the diplomas of



La Merje from Lautaret.

the *Société des Touristes* and the Alpine Club. But there are many less exacting climbs; to the Lake of Puy Vacher, Calvachère, the Col de Pacave or that of Lauze. No lover of the Alps will ever regret a stay at *La Grave*.



The Chalet of the P. L. M. at Lautaret.

Continuing on our way, the Romanche burrows into a long corridor running westwards, it is hemmed in between the rocky spurs supporting the immense glaciers of Mont de Lent and the escarpments leading up to the Aiguille d'Arves and the Grandes Rous-ses. The road accompanies the river into this savage desolation which



La Grave.

well deserves its name, the *Gorge de Malaval*. We pass the beautiful cascade of Fréaux and the abandoned workings of the mines of *Le Grand Clos*; then passing on the left bank the ruins of the *Hospice de l'Oche*, we come at the village of *Le Dauphin* (3270 feet), to a more smiling landscape.

A little plain probably the bed of an ancient lake, is bounded by a rocky barrier. The Roman road, not being able to cross this lake, climbed up the terraces of *Mont-de-Lent*, where one can still discern its track as well as the arch pierced through the gneiss and known as the *Porte Romaine*. With the aid of explosives, modern engineers have pierced the tunnel of Chambon. After traversing it the road follows the left bank of the torrent, passes the tributary of the Ferrand, the bridge of the Mizoën road and comes to the town of *Fréney* (3041 feet).

Lying between two rocky gorges Fréney is most attractive and has many admirers. Some of them are content to breathe the pure mountain air, others come for the beautiful walks which radiate out from it on all sides. To the north, on the right bank, one can visit Mizoën, Auris, Clavans and from *La Besse*, one can make an expedition to the *Col de Chuy*s which leads to the mines of Brandes and the *Tour du Roi Ladre* : or to the waterfall of Ferrand by the road to the *Col des Quirliès* and Etendard. To

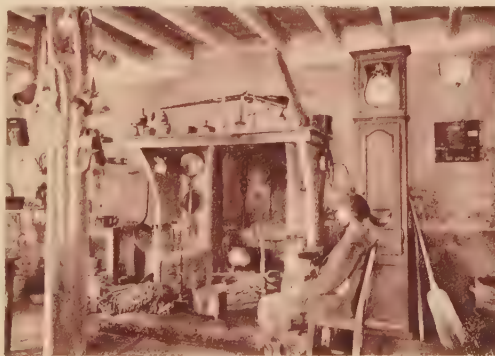


Morning at Lake Lérêt. La Meije.

the south, on the left bank one can make excursions to the Porte Romaine to Bons, Mont de Lent, Col de l'Alpe and the great glaciers which, from the Refuge of Lac Noir, to the Col de la Selle, cover the whole brow of the mountain. Monotony is certainly not to be feared here.

On leaving this little hollow, rocky heights appear again and the road plunges into the Gorge of the Infernet to reach, by the austere *Rampe des Commères*, the plain of Oisans. At the foot of the *Rampe*, the road is joined on the left by that from La Bérarde and, veering sharply to the right, crosses the Romanche by the Pont Sainte-Guillerm.

The surrounding country surprises those who see it for the first time. The plain of Oi-



Interior of the Alpine Museum of Lautaret.



Bourg d'Oisans.

sans lying north and south, 16 kilometers long and from 1000 to 2000 yards broads, is completely surrounded by steep heights of the most curious shapes. The configuration of the plain reminds one of a vast crater, whose sides are only pierced at three points, to the south by the valley of the Vénéon which runs down from the Meije, the Écrins and the Bans : to the west by the valley of the Lignare, and to the north by that of the Eau d'Olle.

This hollow was formerly the Lake of Saint-Laurent; its banks gave way on a historic date, September 13, 1219, when its waters destroyed the town of Grenoble. The road, turning to the north, crosses the Romanche near the waterfall of Sarène and arrives at *Oisans* (2367 feet, 67 kilometers from Briançon).

Having in itself no special interest for visitors, the capital of Oisans attracts the alpinist as the centre of the most picturesque region in the whole of Dauphiny. It is the point of departure for innumerable excursions and ascents, and it is the key to the valley of *La Bérarde* which has been justly called the Mecca of French alpinism. Though it has no wide view, the freshness of its atmosphere makes it popular as a summer resort.

At the northern extremity of the plain, the confluence of the Eau

d'Olle imposes a deviation on the course of the Romanche, which, taking a westerly direction, is lost in a narrow gorge. These gorges, between the Belledonne and the Chamrousse to the north, and the base of Taillefer and the Cornillon to the south, have a curious appearance; their heights, generally covered with trees, rise straight from the bed of the torrent, up to the rocky crest. In this particular gorge, savage though it is, industry has found a favourable site for the installation of hydraulic works; from the Vena till its junction with the Drac, the unfortunate Romanche has to submit to incessant and forced labour.

A steam tramway from Bourg d'Oisans follows the road and serves the numerous factories run by this water power. One can travel in this way from Livet to Rioupéroux, *Les Clavaux* or *Gavet*; at *Séchilienne* one sees the grip of the vice loosen for a moment. A valley running down from the north, from Lake Luitel and Chamrousse, another from the Morte and Taillefer (9387 feet), bring a brighter note into the landscape. We have already come down about 1148 feet, and feel that the restraint of the mountains is soon to be removed. We have still a small and barren defile to pass through, then at *Péage* we come out onto the plain of Vizille.



Route de la Bérarde.

A short run leads to Vizille (922 feet) a little industrial town which challenges attention by its magnificent Castle built by Lesdiguières and which, by the irony of fate, became the cradle of the French Revolution. This Castle, classified as a "historical building" has recently been acquired by the state.

At the end of the long gorges by which their military routes passed through the turbulent populations of a restless country, the Romans built a watch-tower commanding the plain, *Castia Vigiliæ* whence the name of Vizille. A fortress succeeded the Roman camp in the Middle Ages; it, in its turn, was succeeded by a feudal Castle, known as the *Château du Roi*, of which traces still remain. But it did not satisfy the luxu-

rious tastes of the Viceroy of Dauphiny, who between 1610 and 1616 built the splendid Castle we see to-day. If we have not time to visit its great halls and the vast park in which it stands, we can at least see the equestrian statue of Lesdiguières by Jacob Richier above one of its gateways, and in the *Place du Château*, a monument commemorating the birth of the Revolution, by Henry Ding of Grenoble. If time allows it is worth while visiting the chapel in the cemetery, to see the superb carving of the Last Supper, by an unknown artist.



The River near Bourg-d'Oisans.



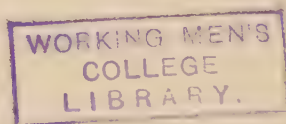
Château d'Uriage.

Two direct roads lead from Villazille to Grenoble, one by Pont de Claix, the other by Brié and Eybens, the way Napoléon travelled on his return from Elba. But in spite of the memories they evoke and the beautiful view they offer of the mass of the Chartreuse, they are eclipsed by the *Route des Alpes* which makes a deviation to include Uriage-les-Bains. The road runs through a tunnel below the Château du Roi, and enters the long narrow valley of Vaulnaveys, between the wooded brows of Chamrousse and the cultivated slopes of the Quatre-Seigneurs. A short distance from the village of *Vaulnaveys* we distinguish the proud Castle of Uriage, an eagle's Eyrie of feudal times in perfect preservation. At its feet the gay little town of *Uriage-les-Bains* (1457 feet) unfolds all its charms. For visitors it has its Casino, for invalids its healing waters, and for tourists its delightful walks and alpinists can fulfil their heart's desire by climbing the three peaks of Belledonne.

The beginnings of Uriage are very ancient for there the Romans had built baths. But the charm of the town is not wholly derived from memories of the past and from its health-giving waters; its beauty belongs rather to the loveliness of its situation and massive environment. The traveller who takes the *Route des Alpes* does so alas

too quickly. Those who can tarry for long weeks may see new beauties every day. Peaks between 9,000 and 12,000 feet abound and Uriage is one of the most favoured spots.

On leaving Uriage we enter the little ravine of the Sonnant whose wooded and winding course comes to an end at the village of *Gières*. From there one sees the forts of the Bastille and the roofs of Grenoble. The tower of St-André, its defence, stands out against the horizon, and passing through the industrial suburb of Croix Rouge we enter the old city of the Dauphins by one of the last remaining gates of the ancient walls. (702 feet 15 miles from Briançon).



Château de Vizille.



Grenoble : The Alps.

CHAPTER VIII

GRENOBLE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

From Grenoble to Chambéry by the three
Cols. The Grande Chartreuse. - Aix-les-Bains.
The Lake of Bourget and Hautecombe.
Annecy and its Lake.

One of the greatest charms of Grenoble is the magnificent setting which frames it, far enough away not to rob it of air or light, near enough to allow one to distinguish all its beautiful detail.

Three mountain masses separated by wide openings form this setting. To the north the southerly heights of the Chartreuse, the Rachais, the Bastille and the Rabot; to the west the mountains of Vercors, the Moucherotte and the summit of Saint-Nizier; to the east the whole

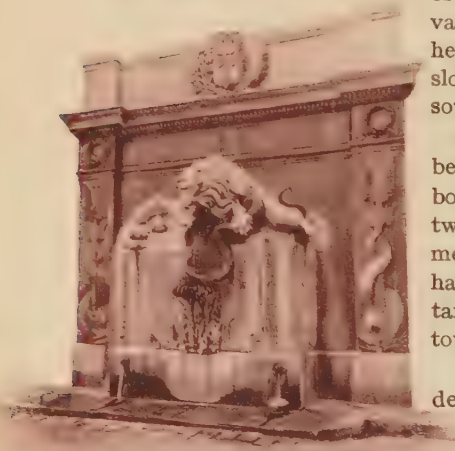
One of the Tritons of the Fontaine des Trois Ordres.





Grenoble : Hôtel de Ville.

chain of Belledonne from the forest of Chamrousse to the jagged peaks of the Roche-de-Saint-Hugon. On certain clear days the white mass of Mont Blanc is visible away down the valley to the north east while the heights of the Obiou, above the green slopes of Conex, close the view to the south.



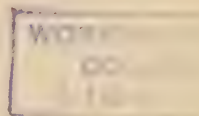
The winding Isère, in making a sharp bend at the foot of the slopes of the Rabot and the Jardin des Dauphins, forms two valleys : the torrential Drac augmented by the Romanche and the Gresse has carved out a third, and this important confluence demanded an important town.

The Roman conquerors found it under the name of *Cularo*, on the frontier of Allobrogia, in *finibus Allobrogum*. Aware of its importance

Grenoble : The Lion Fountain.



The Church of St. André and the Bayard Monument.





Grenoble : The Quays on the Isère.

they surrounded it with walls, provided it with two gateways, the Viennoise and the Romaine. It commanded their great military road from Turin to Vienna. Later, in the course of the iv century, in granting it the rank of a city, they called it *Gratianopolis*, out of which the corruption of centuries made Gratianople, Granople and finally Grenoble.

Ravaged by wars and inundations, that of 1219 carried away half of its population, the town had no chance of developing and by the beginning of the xixth century only had about 12,000 inhabitants. Its prosperity began under the first Empire, and after that increased rapidly. In 1832 it had to enlarge the circumference of its ramparts and in 1880 to triple them.

The ancient capital of the state of Dauphiny, afterwards the capital of the province and the seat of Parliament, Grenoble has preserved a certain administrative and judicial supremacy which give it the character of a large city. The mildness of its climate, and the incomparable charm of its situation, as well as the number of railways which serve it, make it the most important tourist centre of the south east of France, worthy of the proud title, Capital of the French Alps.

Grenoble offers its visitors many attractions besides the marvellous



Grenoble : The Cathedral and the Monument of the Trois Ordres.

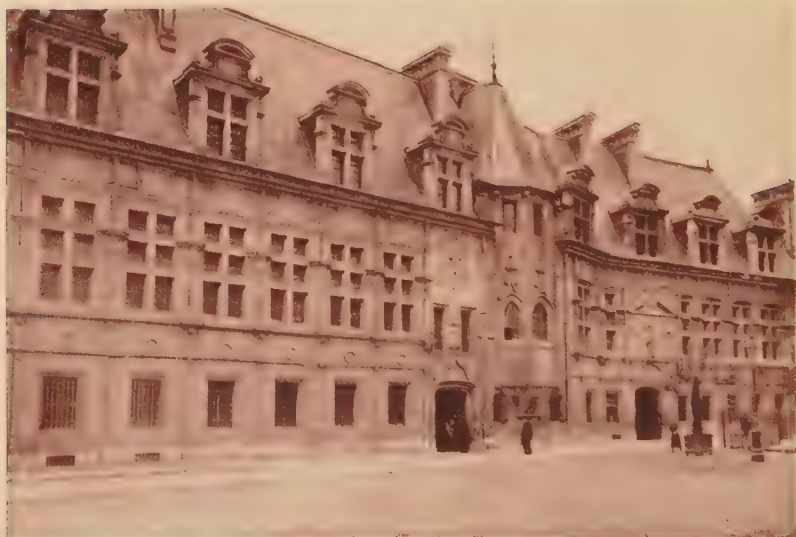
panorama displayed around it. Among its ancient treasures the chief are the Crypt of the church of St-Laurent and the *ciborium* of the Cathedral, not to mention the tower of the Hotel de Ville, the last vestige of the Roman wall. From the Middle Ages the old Palace of the Chamber of Commerce has been used as the *Palais de Justice*,

a real gem of Gothic architecture, recently enlarged and restored. The *Jardin de Ville*, an interesting specimen of the style of Le Notre, has also, alas! been rearranged and modernised. The chief modern buildings are the *Préfecture*, the *Musée Bibliothèque* and the Chamber of Commerce and I would specially mention the *Monument du*

Centenaire or *Fontaine-des-Trois-Ordres*, a splendid example of the work of Henry Ding, of Grenoble.



Château d'Eau Lavalette.



Grenoble : Façade of the Palais de Justice.

In the church of St-André, marked by its high Roman tower, we see the tomb of Bayard, the knight *sans peur et sans reproche* of whom a statue by Raggi adorns the neighbouring square.

The abundance of water is evident from the numerous monumental fountains; the *Château d'Eau Lavalette* in a corner of the *Place Grenette*; the Fountain of the Torrent by Basset in the *Jardin de Ville*; the Fountain of the Lion by Sappey at the entrance to the *Rue Saint-Laurent*; the jet of water in the *Place de Verdun*, and so on.

Various roads into the mountains of the Chartreuse attract the visitor. Going up either side of the luxuriant valley of the Grésivaudan one can get to Chambéry by Chapareillan or by Montmélian. By Voreppe and the Col de la Placette, or by Voiron and the Gorges of Crossey, one can reach St-Laurent-du-Pont, the Echelles and the valley of Couz. The *Route des Alpes* follows the intermediate route, which crossing the massif of Chartreuse, penetrates more rapidly into its picturesque beauty; as it crosses the Cols of Porte, Cucheron and Frêne, it has naturally been called the *Route des Trois Cols*.

We leave Grenoble on the right bank of the Isère, by the Quai St-Laurent with its magnificent view of the chain of Belledune as far as

the Col de Vence. We stop for a moment in the faubourg of *La Tronche*, to see in its humble church the beautiful picture of *La Vierge de la Délivrance*, the chef d'œuvre of Hébert of Dauphiny. Then we come to a steep gradient which continues for about 15 kilometers, to the top of the *Col de Porte* through the vineyards of La Tronche and Corenc. The country gradually assumes the aspect of a wide valley, with luxuriant vegetation numerous villages and a capriciously winding river, while the mountains reveal varied beauties of forest, rock and glacier. Then, near at hand we see great walls pierced by many windows and the little belfry of a chapel outlined against the sky : it is the ancient convent of *Montfleuri* where Claudine de Tencin the adventurous sister of the Cardinal was a novice. The religious of former days are now replaced by students. Further on the Castle of Bouquéron stands on a height dominating the plain. Another feudal building appears in a fold of the hills, with an old battlemented tower, the Castle of Arvilliers, commonly called the Tour des Chiens because the Dauphins kept their hounds there.

A detour across the flank of St-Eynard gives wonderful views of Mont Blanc and later of the mountains of Vercors, the Moucherolle, the Grand Veymont, Mont Aiguille and on Grenoble spread out at our feet.



Grenoble : Cours St. André. Pont de la Bastille. Fort Rabot.

At *La Chapelle* (2462 feet) we pass by the *Col de Vence* (2460 feet), from the valley of the Isère to that of the Vence. The road runs up the left bank of that river and after passing through a short ravine, emerges on the beautiful plateau of *Le Sappey* surrounded by forest and dominated by the mass of *Chamechaude*. (6847 feet).

The outlook from this green but mountainous valley is rather shut in. Crossing the torrent we come to the village of *Le Sappey* (3250 feet), which, owing to its bracing air and its proximity to Grenoble (10 kilometers) has become a favourite summer resort for the citizens of that town.

The road then crosses the eastern slope of *Chamechaude*, passes by the *Col de Palaquit* into the small valley of the *Sarcenas*, and passing through the dense forest of *Porte*, comes to the Pass of that name by which it reaches the valley of the *Guiers Mort*.

A road to the left leads up, in about 600 yards to the real *Col de Porte* (4436 feet) where the *Société des Touristes* of Dauphiny, has built a *Chalet-Hotel*, chiefly to popularise the winter sports over the great meadow lands which extend north of the Col. From this Hotel and its neighbourhood we have a fine view of the basin of the *Guiers Mort*, towards *Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse* and surrounded by the *Rochers de Charmanson*,



Chalet of the Col de Porte.

the mass of the Grand Som (6670 feet), the Lances de Malissart, and the Aup-du-Scieu. The Signal de Charmanson (6130 feet), la Pinée (5838 feet), and the peak of Chamechaude (6847 feet) are easily climbed. From the Col or the Chalet we run down into this cheerful valley we emerge from the forest and through the fields of Cottaves, arrive at that part of St-Pierre-de-Chartreuse which adjoins the bridge over the Guiers Mort (2607 feet) and is called *La Diat*. A group of Hotels is built at the junction of the roads from St-Laurent-du-Pont and the convent of the Grande Chartreuse, but the town of *St-Pierre-de-Chartreuse* itself stands



The Chartreuse.

on a plateau about 3000 feet high on the southern slopes of the Grand Som. A halt at La Diat allows us to visit the monastery and its surroundings after lunch. In 1082, Bruno of Cologne, wishing to devote himself to a life of penitence, set out with six companions to found a religious Order in some quiet and deserted spot. From humility he called it by the name of the nearest village. The Order of Chartreuse developed and spread over the whole of Europe, having eventually more than a hundred convents. But the head of the Order always remained at the place where it had been founded and every year the Priors of all the Carthusian monasteries came back to a reunion in the Chapter house, to deliberate on questions of general interest to the Order. The French Revolution drove out the monks and confiscated their property. Under the Restoration they were able to return to their convent, but only as tenants. Enriched by the popularity of a liqueur which one of them had concocted,

to mitigate the austerity of their lives, they were the good angels of these mountains and held out a helping hand to all in trouble. It was by their help that the famous church of Voiron was built, also, on the revival of their Order, that of Grenoble, as well as the churches of St-Laurent-du-Pont, St-Pierre-d'Entremont and many others. They founded a school for deaf mutes at Currière and a large Hospital at St-Laurent-du-Pont. Attracted by the fame of their sanctity as well as by the natural beauty of the place, tourists from all over the world flock to La Chartreuse.

On April 29, 1903, the Fathers were expelled by the application of the *Loi des Congrégations*, but their reputation was such that visitors still come to see the walls which sheltered them.

From La Diat, after following the right bank of the Guiers Mort for a short distance, the road crosses to the left bank and passes a beautiful Alpine Garden recently laid out below the *Grand Logis*, where important visitors used to be put up. A little way down the picturesque ravine of the *Étroit du Grand Logis*, a modern bridge replaces the old *Pont des Perdés* or *Porte de l'Enclos*, the entry to the « wilderness » of the monastery. A short distance from the village of Courrerie, we arrive at the *Grande Char-*



The Chartreuse.



The Chartreuse.



St. Pierre-de-Chartreuse.

reuse. An official guide shows part of the building, but it has lost its chief interest and it is with melancholy regret that we pass through the echoing cloisters, the deserted chapter-house, the open cells and the empty chapels.

Returning to La Diat, the road runs up to the plateau of St-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, then leaving the gorge of the Guiers Mort to the east, it ascends the valley of the Couzon to the North. A pleasant run across the eastern slope of the Grand Som, through several prosperous little hamlets leads to the *Col du Cucheron* (3731 feet) by which we pass from the valley of the Guiers Mort to that of the Guiers Vif and come out on a vast green and wooded hollow enclosed by the white escarpements of the Roche Vêran, Mont Otheran, Granier and Alpette. The *Col du Frêne* faces us on the horizon between Mont de Joigny and the cleft of the Granier. Charming as a whole, the valley of the Guiers Vif is equally attractive in detail. We pass the villages of Saint-Philibert, Grand and Petit Chenevey : the Roche Vêran assumes a menacing appearance as we approach it and at *St-Pierre-d'Entremont* (3000 feet) we find ourselves again at the level of the torrent.

It would be delightful to stop at this pretty little village, divided by the stream which rushes through it, its two parts being in different

departments, formerly even in different states. We ascend the Guiers to its picturesque source, a waterfall of four cascades above a vast cavern hollowed out in the Aup-du-Scieu. We then descend to the left, by impressive ravines to *Les Echelles* (1358 feet).

After passing Le Pont, on the left bank of the clear waters now called the Couzon, we enter Savoy, and traversing narrow gorges overlooked by the old tower of Éperney, climb up into *Entremont-le-Vieux*. The gradient grows steeper and forces the road to many windings to reach the arête of the *Col du Frêne* (3819 feet) where an amazing view forces us to stop. From the clear reflections of the Lake of Bourget to the sombre and formidable heights of the Granier, a great semi-circle of mountains faces us; the summits of the Bauges, the snowy heights of Mont Blanc, of Vanoise, and part of the Massif of Allevard, while at our feet we look down on the abysses of the Myans; on the other side we look over to the luxuriant valleys and wooded heights of the Charentreuse, the crests of the Dent de Crolles, the Cône de Chamechaude and the jagged peaks of the Grand Som.

A little Chalet-Hotel stands in an excellent situation for admiring this marvellous panorama and we could spend many hours there if the humming of the motor did not remind us that



Waterfall of the Guiers Vif.

we have still much to see. We descend by the wooded slopes of Mont de Joigny and through the numerous valleys hollowed out by the torrents : every turning gives us different views of these richly cultivated Savoyard valleys. The principal event of this part of the run is the



Chambéry : The Château.

tunnel of La Fosse on emerging from which we look down on the Lake of Bourget and the neighbourhood of Aix. The main road runs by Montagnole, but a short cut possible to small cars or carriages allows of a visit to *Les Charmettes*, the scene of the love affairs of M^{me} de Warens and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We enter Chambéry by the Rue de la République.

The town of Chambéry is of comparatively recent date. The first settlement was probably destroyed in ancient times by the floods of the Leysse. The Roman camp of *Lemincum* oc-

cupied the height on the right bank of the torrent, where the suburb of Lémenc now stands. In the ninth century a stronghold, built on rising-ground on the opposite bank, was acquired by the Counts of the Maurienne who took up their residence there with the title of Counts of Savoy. The town which grew up round the Castle increased with the fortune of its owners and became the capital of the County, then of the Du-



Les Charmettes.

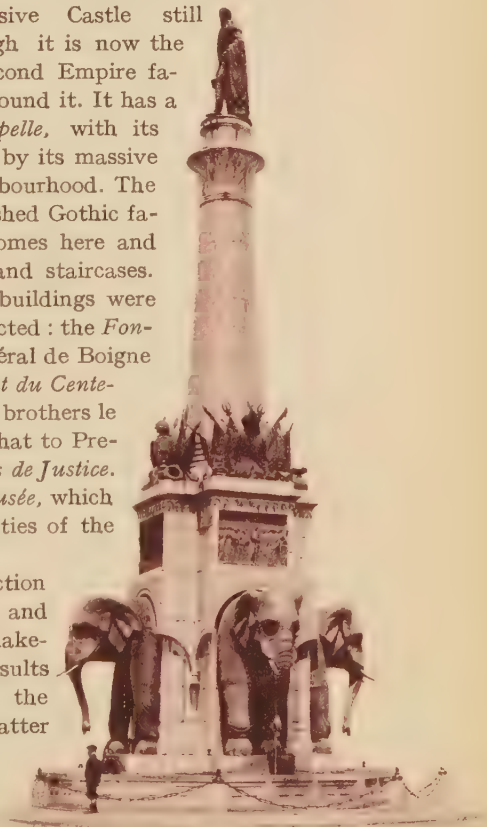
wears the air of a fortress even though it is now the home of the Préfecture and has had a Second Empire façade stuck on to it and gardens planted round it. It has a real gem grafted on to it, the *Sainte Chapelle*, with its ogival apse. From the terrace formed by its massive donjon one has a fine view of the neighbourhood. The Cathedral has an interesting but unfinished Gothic façade, and in the tortuous streets one comes here and there on old houses with noble courts and staircases.

In a fever of restoration, many old buildings were pulled down : many new monuments erected : the *Fontaine des Éléphants* to the memory of Général de Boigne a benefactor of the town : the *Monument du Centenaire* by Falguière; the monument of the brothers le Maistre on the staircase of the Castle; that to President Favre at the gateway of the *Palais de Justice*.

The most interesting place is the *Musée*, which possesses a collection of lacustrine antiquities of the first rank.

Scientific excavation under the direction of Costa of Beauregard, Chantre, Rabut and others, led to the discovery of important lake-dwellings in the Lake of Bourget. The results of these researches were divided between the Museums of Aix and Chambéry, but the latter possesses the most important finds. The great majority of them date from the end of the bronze age : at St-Saturnin

chy, of Savoy Chambéry reached its zenith in the xvth century, for in the beginning of the xviii, its sovereigns, who had grown more and more powerful, transported their capital to Turin, deserting the cradle which had sheltered their growth. But Chambéry has preserved the flavour of its past. Its severe but impressive Castle still



Chambéry : The Elephant Fountain.



Chambéry.

de Grésins, Châtillon, Saut and Conjux, curious instruments have been found which demonstrate the developement of the ideas and imple-
ments of the ancient inhabitants of this district. The lake, whose
beauty now attracts so many visitors, was appreciated then for the
security with which its waters surrounded the dwellings of its first in-
habitants

Like many other towns,
Chambéry is being transform-
ed by industrial enterprise.
New buildings have been
erected in the *Jardin du Ver-
ney* and the *Parc Savoiroux*, on
ground gained by the cover-
ing in of the Leysse. Hand-
some modern houses rub
shoulders with old mansions,
the picturesque is ef-
faced by the banal. The
visitor should hasten



*Lake Bourget and the
Dent du Chat.*

to see these old towns before they have been utterly despoiled of character. For uniformity is stretching out its hand and wiping out the character and costume of even the most secluded valleys where the young people now dress like town dwellers, in drab and gloomy garments. We leave Chambéry by the *Avenue du Comte-Vert*, passing the railway station. Then, between the chain of Mont Grelle and the Épine on the left, and that of Nivolet and Mont Revard to the right, we have the sensation of fleeing down a great corridor. Suddenly a sheet of water appears, the head of the Lake of Bourget. Close to it we pass the village of *Le Bourget*, its ruined Castle, its church with fine bas-reliefs, and near by, the Castle of Bourdeau and the road and the *Col du Chat*. On the other side we look over to Viviers and the main road to Aix. The *Route des Alpes* runs along between the shores of the Lake and the hill



Cathedral of Chambéry.

of Tresserve; then, from Petit Port, a wide avenue leads to *Aix-les-Bains*. (14 kilometers from Chambéry. 850 feet),

As at Uriage, it is from objects found in the course of canalisation, and in the digging of foundations, that we learn of the Roman origin of Aix, for no authentic text mentioning it has survived to our day. And the place itself points with just pride to its Roman Arch, its Temple of Diana, and its inscriptions, irrefutable testimony to its ancient origin.

Brought into prominence in the time of Henri IV who came to benefit from its waters, and carefully developed under the Kings of Sardinia, by the sixteenth century its sulphur springs had acquired universal fame; then fashion stepped in to make Aix-les-Bains the rendez-vous of the fashionable



Aix : Arch of Campanus.

world. As its *clientèle* is only partly composed of invalids, two centres of amusement offer rival attractions. The *Grand Cercle* and the *Villa des Fleurs*, with their fairy-like illuminations, their concerts, theatres, balls and gaming table, attract visitors of every nation. Horse-racing, regattas battles of flowers, fêtes of every kind succeed each other during the season so that the delights of expeditions in the mountains can be combined

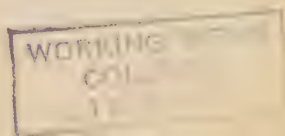


Abbey of Hautecombe.

with the pleasures of modern civilisation. A rack and pinion railway takes those who wish to admire the view without exertion, to the Plateau or to the belvedere of Mont Blanc. A service of steamboats on the Lake of Bourget makes it easy to visit the Castle of Bordeau and Chatillon, and above all the celebrated Abbey of Hautecombe, the sepulchre of the Kings of Sardinia. Pleasure boats are to be hired and the lake is well stocked with fish.

The neighbourhood of Aix is rich in delightful walks; to the baths of *Marlioz*, the waterfall of *Grésy-sur-Aix*, the terrace of *La Chambotte*, the *Col du Mont du Chat*: as well as longer excursions to Bariges, Fort de l'Écluse or the Grande Chartreuse. But we have not time to see everything and rather than attempt to choose between these attractions, we hasten on our way through the fertile valley of Sierroz

At Grésy we pass the road to Pont de l'Abîme, Lescheraine and Châtelard and at Albens we cross the valley and come right under the shadow of Semnoz. If we had time to make a *détour* in a hilly region, we might go by Rumilly, the entrance to the impressive Val du Fier, to Lovagny with its *Chateau de Montrottier* and the curious gorges of the Fier. The threshold of Haute-Savoie is so entrancing, that it would



*Annecy.*

amply repay a long visit. But the hurried tourist pushes on and soon comes to the pretty town of *Annecy*.

The capital of Haute-Savoie, Annecy is charmingly situated beside its Lake. Lying on the canals of the Vasse and the Thiou, it owes its industrial prosperity as well as its attraction, to its waters. Annecy was founded in the beginning of the Middle Ages by those who came to shelter under the protection of its Castle, built on a spur of Semnoz. It replaced the Roman town of *Boutae*, which was so completely destroyed by the barbarians that hardly a trace of it has been found on the plain of Fins. From such obscure beginnings it was brought to prominence by the great reputation of its Bishop, St Francis de Sales, but it was after its union with France in 1860, that its period of prosperity and development began. Its population has more than doubled : the narrow and sordid quarter which pressed closely round the Castle has given place to wide, airy avenues of modern houses. As space was precious the town unfortunately thought itself obliged to pull down the convent of the Visitation, so rich in memories of Ste Jeanne de Chantal. The convent has moved to a little hill outside the town, where it looks down on the Castle and enjoys an incomparable view. The piety of the faithful has kept the chain



Lake of Annecy from Duingt.

of tradition unbroken, but it is none the less to be regretted that these material links with the work of the saintly Bishop and that of Madame de Chantal, have been sacrificed.

The Museum of Annecy on the second floor of the *Hotel de Ville* has interesting pictures and an admirable collection of lacustrine antiquities which bear witness to the early habitations of these regions.

The principal attraction of Annecy is its lake, reputed to be the most beautiful of the French Alps. Not too large, divided into two parts by the promontory of Duingt, surrounded by green and wooded heights which rise to the Fauteuil de la Tournette, this sheet of clear water has an unspeakable charm. The steamers which ply on it serve many lovely districts, Veyrier, Menthon, Talloires, and allow of delightful excursions, to the Roc de Chère, the imposing heights of Charbon, the ascent of the Tournette or the Dents de Lafont.

Living in a gracious and fertile sub-alpine region, Annecy is an excellent centre for walks, and the motor car has of course greatly extended the radius of excursions in the surrounding country.

The stage which we have just traversed is one of the most interesting on the Route des Alpes. One might almost say that it is the typical



Lake of Annecy from Talloires.

stretch of this delightful journey and one that discloses every kind of panorama to be found between Nice and Geneva. This reason alone might suffice to explain the great influx of visitors, but there are others. The Route des Alpes is not an indivisible line which can be travelled in its entirety from one end to the other. To enjoy it best it must be taken in sections. Grenoble, spread out in the centre of radiating valleys, situated at the junction of the Northern and Southern Alps, is admirably designed as a centre from which travellers can with great ease pursue their various journeys along the Route des Alpes. Students, who by hundreds spend their vacation every year at Grenoble in order to attend the special vacation courses at the University, know well the beauties of the city and its neighbourhood, and the charm of the Chartreuse range, the first one approaches on leaving Grenoble for Annecy. One might indeed call it the «Chemin des Ecoliers» for the ascent from the valley of the Iser, which is extremely picturesque, considerably shortens the way. But is it not better, instead of following the line of the Chartreuse range and the valley of the Iser, to plunge direct into the heart of the massif? There one may see the most beautiful trees in forests strictly preserved by the administration who have turned the region into a species of national park under very strict management. On emerging

from the forests, he lacks sadly in imagination who does not receive an indelible impression of the scene before him, for there appear the Col du Cucheron, then the Col du Frêne, the vast perpendicular of Mont Granier, in a word, mountain scenery at its grandest. Here then are two characteristic aspects of the Alps, but other surprises are in store for the traveller who follows the descent towards Chambéry.

On emerging from a short tunnel a totally different panorama strikes his eye. The base of the mountain has receded into the distance, at his feet the lake of Bourget shimmers, a rich valley smiles from luxuriant meadows brilliant with every species of flowers. This is the region of the fertile Alps. From thence we approach Savoy rich in souvenirs and monuments of the past.

The calm of the scenery of Aix lulls one gently and we continue our journey to Annecy under the influence of a quiet charm and this is one of the great features of the country in Savoy. This explains the great popularity given to the Grenoble-Annecy route by travellers and lovers of the country-side. It is true that one misses the vast scenery of the highest mountains, but this has already been seen in the passage of the Oisans range of which Grenoble is the key and will be observed again on the road which we are now to traverse which will lead us to Chamonix.



Château de Montrottier.



Chalets on the Route des Aravis.

CHAPTER IX

FROM ANNECY TO SAINT-GERVAIS

Thônes and the Col des Aravis. - Mégève and Combloux. Le Fayet-Saint-Gervais.

From Annecy the *Route des Alpes* runs along the shores of the Lake by the beautiful *Allées d'Albigny* recently called the *Allées Eugène-Sue*. This short run offers lovely glimpses of the blue waters of the Lake set like a sapphire in a casket of green hills. As far as the cross roads of Albigny, we run through the rich vineyards of the base of Mont Veyrier. The road winds towards Chavoires and Veyrier, then, rises gradually above the Lake. On reaching the scattered houses of Menthon, it turns, passes the Château de Menthon, where St-Bernard accepted his vocation, and reaches the *Col de Bluffv* (2082 feet) by which it enters the valley of the Fier. Through a smiling landscape, dominated by the heights of Parmelan, we run down towards the stream and join the road from Annecy-le-Vieux



La Giettaz.

to Thônes. It continues in the same direction as far as Morette, through a narrow valley, passing the waterfalls of the Belle Inconnue and the Morette. Leaving that village the road inclines to the south-east and soon comes to the little town of *Thônes* (21 kilometers. 2050 feet).

Like the majority of mountain cities, Thônes lies on a little plain caused by the junction of two valleys. The Fier flows from the Clefs and the Manigord, the Nom from the north-east, where at St-Jean-de-Sixt it is not far from the source of the Borne. We now climb up the *Combe des Villards* above Thônes.

Everything in this part of the country looks smiling and prosperous, houses, meadows, valley, and mountains, and this charm comes to a climax in the favourite resort of *Saint-Jean-de-Sixt* (3152 feet). Thence, by an almost imperceptible watershed, we pass into the basin of the Borne,

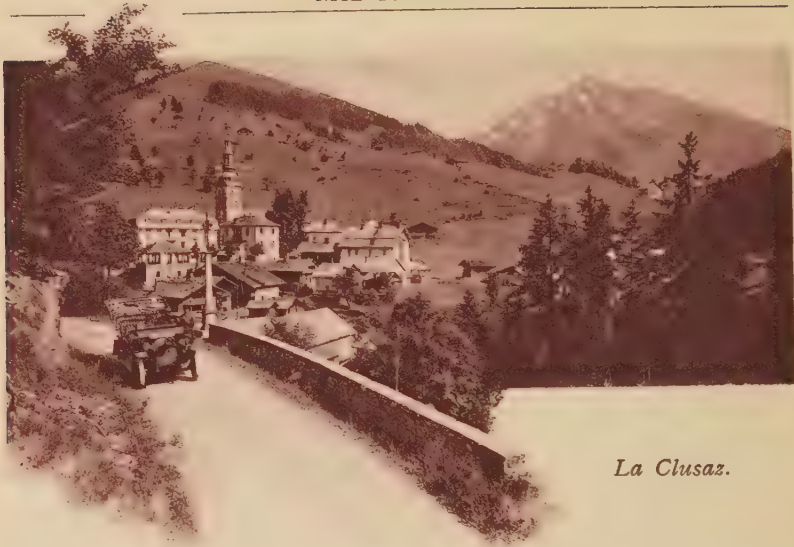
to return to the Grand Bornand and its lovely meadows. The road passes through a little forest and comes out in the charming district of the *La Clusaz* (3412 feet).

The valley of the Nant-du-Vard here joins that of the Nom; both are pastoral valleys, strewn with chalets and herds of cows.

The gradient becomes more accen-



St. Jean-de-Sixt.

*La Clusaz.*

tuated; the road rises on the right bank of the valley of the Nom, which grows narrower, and while the valley of the Nant des Prises inclines to the west, that of the Nom turns to the East and soon we see the wide opening of the Col des Aravis in front of us, between the Roi de l'Étalle (8147 feet) and the Porte des Aravis (7615). Passing a little hotel and a chapel, we arrive at the summit (4918 feet). The glittering chain of Mont Blanc is seen surging up from the Aiguille Verte to La Bérengère above the green heights of the Tête-du-Torraz. It takes some time to recognize and name all the peaks, even to identify Mont Blanc, which from here rises above the Dôme du Goûter.

After feasting our eyes on the fairylike enchantment of this view, we descend rapidly into the valley of the Arondine, no less pastoral than that of the Nom. We pass the Hotel Jeanne-d'Arc, beautifully situated on a little hill, then at the foot of the valley we come to *La Giettaz* (3642 feet).

On leaving *La Giettaz*, the Arondine flows through a narrow picturesque gorge and joins the Arly a little above Flumet. The road runs high up over a curious stretch where tunnels alternate with arches through a beautiful forest. At Flumet it joins the road from Albertville to Sallanches by the valley of the Arly.

The Bourg of *Flumet* (3010 feet) has a certain importance as the seat of the customs, but it has only one long street on the right bank of



Le Grand Bornand.



Pont de Flumet.

the Arly. Seen from the left bank or from the Pont de Bellecombe, it has a curious appearance, the balconies of its houses hanging over the gorge.

We ascend the right bank of the Arly through amusing miniature gorges and we reach the little town of *Mégève* (3615 feet).

An old feudal bourg with remains of towers and walls, *Mégève* boasts good hotels and is a favourite resort which aspires to being a centre for winter sports. The slopes which surround it are so gentle that one can hardly believe one-still self in the basin of the Arly, so much does the landscape resemble the valley of the Arve. This is a good starting point for the Ascent of Mont Joly (8291 feet) with its wonderful panorama. Easy grassy paths communicate with Contamines or with Saint Nicolas de Vérocé. From the *Col de Mégève* (3683 feet) the road descends towards the plain of the Arve. Facing us



The Mégève.



Valley of Mégève.

is the massif of Plate, and the *Rochers de Fiz* are represented by the imposing Aiguille de Varens, whose steep slopes rise above the forest and high pastures.

We soon come to crossroads : that to the right leads to Saint-Gervais, that to the left to Sallanches. For the last few years motors have followed that to the left, along which we come (1 kilometer) to the excellent Hotel of *Combloux* whence the chain of Mont Blanc is seen in its full glory above the valley of Chamonix. The stop for lunch is perhaps no less attractive.

We return to the cross roads whence the drive along the base of the Mont d'Arbois is never to be forgotten. The descent fol-



A Boulevard in St. Gervais.

*St. Gervais-les-Bains.*

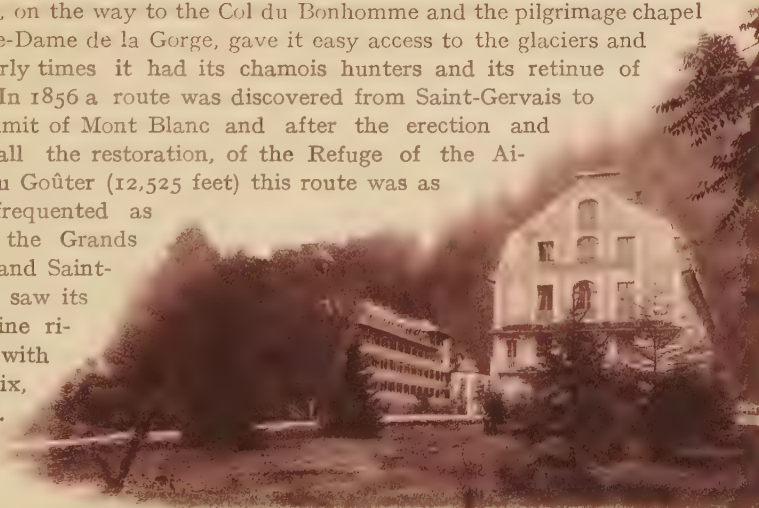
lows the sinuosities of the mountain and a wonderful panorama is unrolled before us, the valleys of the Nant and the Arve. Through a forest of varied trees glimpses of the wide view delight us; descending the slopes of the Col de la Forclaz we cross the river by the Pont du Diable and up a steep hill run into the little square of Saint-Gervais (2651 feet) formerly Saint-Gervais-le-village, now Saint-Gervais-les-Bains.

This little place has had a varied career. When the only way to Chamonix was by the Col de la Forclaz, a halt at Saint-Gervais was a necessity, but from the time it was possible to reach Chamonix by the gorges of the Arve, the bridge of Pélissier and the Montées, Saint-Gervais was deserted and had to content itself with the rôle of market-town and capital of the valley of Montjoie. The discovery of mineral waters by a lawyer called Gontard, did not at first bring many visitors, but the catastrophe of 1892, which carried away part of the Baths, coincided with the development of tourist facilities and was extremely favourable to it. If up till then it had been nothing but a modest village grouped round its church, it now saw hotels and houses springing up and forming the fine street now the centre of its life. The building of the cog-wheel railway of Mont Blanc, which opened a station there, connected it with its suburb of Fayet.



Combloux.

The situation of Saint-Gervais, at the entrance to the valley of Contamines, on the way to the Col du Bonhomme and the pilgrimage chapel of Notre-Dame de la Gorge, gave it easy access to the glaciers and from early times it had its chamois hunters and its retinue of guides. In 1856 a route was discovered from Saint-Gervais to the summit of Mont Blanc and after the erection and above all the restoration, of the Refuge of the Aiguille du Goûter (12,525 feet) this route was as much frequented as that of the Grands Mulets and Saint-Gervais saw its old alpine rivalry with Chamonix, satisfied.



*Bath
at St. Gervais.*

To reach the plain, the Bon-Nant, already about 200 feet below the Pont du Diable, rushes down in two cascades and innumerable rapids while the road makes a great curve towards the north over the slopes of of the Tête Noire. It passes the village of *Les Plagnes*, where, in private grounds the famous *Pierre de la Forclaz* is preserved, with its Roman inscription bearing witness to the presence of Roman conquerors in this secluded region. At Fayet the road joins the classic route from Geneva to Chamonix.

This village of Fayet whose official name is now Le Fayet-Saint-Gervais-les-Bains, was founded in the beginning of the xixth century at the end of the gorge of the Bon Nant, near the Baths. That establishment was swept away by the inundation of 1892 but rebuilt and enlarged has hotels, shops and villas round it the P. L. M. railway has its terminal station there, the Mont Blanc railway starts from there and a great electric factory has introduced a new element of prosperity. The auto-cars of the *Route des Alpes* stop in the station square (1902 feet) before proceeding to Evian and Chamonix.

St. Gervais is the point of departure for one of the ways of approaching Mont Blanc. Via the Col de Voza, served by the railway which is called the Mont Blanc line, we approach the great glacier of Bionnassay. The shelter on Tête Rousse allows for comfortable rest. From thence seven hours suffice to attain the summit of the giant of the Alps. This Route, the last discovered, is becoming the most frequented.



Chapel at the Col des Aravis.

WORKING MEN'S
LIBRARY



Le Lautaret and Le Galibier.

CHAPTER X

AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

The Col of Galibier and St-Michel-of-Maurienne —
Albertville, and the Gorges of the Arly — Flumet,
Mégève, St-Gervais.

The region of the Alps so abounds in loveliness that it is very difficult to give a single itinerary of the Route des Alpes without leaving out some places of interest.

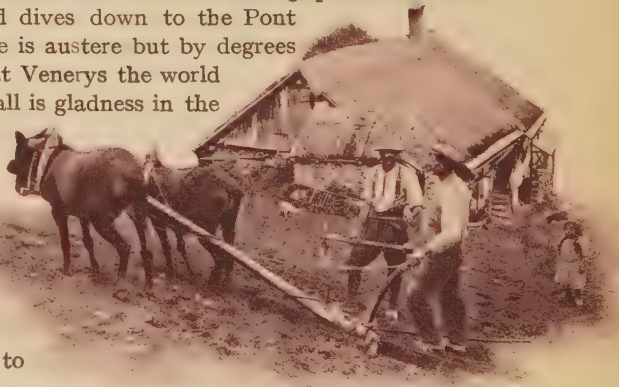
For this reason we give two routes from Briançon to St-Gervais, one by way of Grenoble, the other by the Col du Galibier, la Maurienne and the Gorges of the Arly.

The route first named is worthy of interest on all points. It leaves the way by Oisans some two hundred metres before le Lautaret, and winding through meadows rich in flowers rises to the Combe Noire; it



Panorama of St. Michel-de-Maurienne.

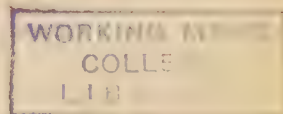
takes a serpentine course along the ravine of the Maurette and reaches the mouth of a tunnel from which is seen the magnificent panorama of the glacier of Pelvoux. Returning to the light we see before us a stony ascent which rises towards the high valley of Valloires; away on the horizon sparkle the snowy heights of Vanoise and ever before us is the magnificent mass of Mont Blanc. The route descending, passes the wretched barns of Galibier and dives down to the Pont de l'Achate. The landscape is austere but by degrees vegetation asserts itself; at Venerys the world becomes more lovely and all is gladness in the Valloire valley. Having left the Valloirette which plunges into the Arc in the form of a great waterfall, the Route ascends again towards the Col des Trois Châpelles to enter into the side valley of Valmeinier, soon to



Ploughing at Valloires.



Haute-Maurienne : The Hamlet of Ecot.





Font at St. Jean-de-Maurienne.

leave it by means of a short tunnel excavated under Telegraph Fort. It reaches Maurienne and the important town of St Michel-de-Maurienne via the village of St. Martin-d'Arc.

St. Michel-de-Maurienne is placed on the right bank of the Arc at the foot of the slopes which lead to the Col des Encombres and the town has emerged from its former apathy in developing attractions for tourists, and by use of the motive power of the Arc. Its hotels are cheerful and agreeable.

When the ideal road via the Col de l'Iseran (8310 feet) and the Col du Bonhomme (7449 feet) is open for motor traffic, one will be able to avoid Maurienne and procure a direct route to the valley of Contamines and St. Gervais.

While waiting for the completion of the immense work which has to be undertaken in order to traverse the mountainous region, one must descend the valley and follow the Turin-Chambéry road.

The country is gloomy, the rocks precipitous, while inundations are frequent.

Having crossed the Arve, we reach St. Jean-de-Maurienne, which possesses a cathedral containing fine wood carvings in the Choir, a very beautiful ciborium, and the tomb of Humbert of the White Hands. Behind the cathedral is a finely pierced cloister and close at hand the gateway of the old Lambertin College. The famous vineyards of Princens and Hermillon and the old romanesque tower of Berold, which dominates the defile of Pontamafrey, completes what is of interest at St. Jean-de-Maurienne.

Returning to the right bank of the Arc, the Route opens out into a plain resulting from the meeting of the chief valley of the valley of Villards and of La Madeleine; at the opening one may descry the still proud



Choir Stalls of St. Jean-de-Maurienne.

ruins of the Château de Cuines, we then reach the town of La Chambre, formerly the head quarters of the Chambre des Comptes of Maurienne and the site of a rich Abbey of which nothing now remains save the front of the Church. At Aiguebelle nothing is left of the famous citadel of Charbonnière, which was captured and destroyed by Sully. From here we enter the beautiful and fertile valley of the Isère and the Route ascends to reach the sous-préfecture of Albertville (37 km. from Lautaret). Situated at the summit of the region which is often called the Haut-Graisivaudan, at a point where meet the waters of the Isère, the Arly and the Doron de Beaufort, was one of the stopping places of the Roman route which connected Milan with Vienna, and was known under the expressive name of Ad Publicano. After the fall of the Roman Empire it was called Conflans, later, on moving down to the plain, it was called Hôpital-sous-Conflans, and more recently Albertville.

Albertville is a new town and has neither monuments nor souvenirs which need detain us, so we hasten to reascend the course of the Arly where at 2700 feet we reach the centre of the manufacturing district of Fontaines-d'Ugine.



*Baptismal Fonts
at Conflans.*



Cloisters at St. Jean de-Maurienne.

Through narrow clefts, walled with pines, the Route has conquered its way over rock and precipice.

At one time almost touching the boiling waters, then soaring to great heights, the Route crosses the Gorge six times and from the

bridges one gets the most varied and picturesque views.

Then it drives a passage under the rock and at the lower entrance of the great tunnel a particularly thrilling view is disclosed.

The confluent of the Arodine necessitates a considerable détour into a strange and dark place and on coming out again into full daylight one beholds an impressive panorama of the depths in which the Arly twists and dashes.

In some few minutes we arrive at Flumet and rejoin the Route from Annecy to St. Gervais via the Col des Aravis (110 km. from Lautaret, 138 from Briançon).

From Flumet to Mégève the difference of 633 feet in height is spread over a distance of about 12 kilometers. The magnificent amphitheatre of Mégève is a veritable abode of peace. By a great spiral the road inclines towards the valley of the Arve with a splendid panorama of the crests of the Plate and Rochers de Fiz, then passes almost imperceptibly into the valley of Bon Nant. Winding through a beautiful forest, we see here and there the gleam of the glaciers through the trees before emerging on the valley of Montjoie where St. Gervais lies before us with its retinue of hotels.



Place de St. Gervais.



In the Valley of Chamonix.

CHAPTER XI

CHAMONIX AND ITS VALLEY

In order to initiate the tourist fully into the secrets of the Alps, the *Route des Alpes* could not neglect Mont Blanc and the valley of Chamonix. This valley having no egress except into Switzerland, the *Route* has to stop there and begin its two last stages again from *Fayet*.

The road from *Fayet* to Chamonix was made between 1865 and 1899. It runs up the left bank of the Arc with a gentle gradient to Chède where it becomes steeper and is carried on massive under-building round the base of the Tête Noir. The double waterfall of Chède faces us as we pass through a lovely stretch of country. After the little plateau of Châtelard, a short tunnel, in the construction of which the remains of a Roman aqueduct were discovered, leads to the little plain of Servoz. The summits



The Col d'Anterne.

of the Rochers des Fiz and the Col d'Anterne come into sight with Servoz lying to the right not far from the dark gorges of the Diosa.

Then comes the famous ascent known as the Montées and after circling round a large wooded hollow, we return to the deep gorge of the Arve, where the river breaks into rapids and fills the air with fine spray shining iridescent in the sun. A stretch of road suspended over the abyss terminates at the Pont Sainte-Marie, below the valley of Les Houches.

Passing on to the right bank of the torrent, the road rises right into the snows of the Aiguilles du Goûter and the glittering Glacier de la Gria. Grassy slopes, which extend right up to the Pavillon de Bellevue, the Col de Voza and the Prarion, spread out more and more, and when we reach the top of the ascent near the station of Les Houches, the whole valley of ChamoniX lies before us in its incomparable setting of forests and glaciers. Its beauty is unrivalled and is indeed the apotheosis of our whole journey.

The caprices of the Arve drive the road back to the left bank and it runs with gentle undulations through fields and scattered villages. Rocks and glaciers succeed each other; our gaze is enchanted by the noble mass

of the Brévent. Near the hamlet of Les Bossons the seracs of the glacier are seen advancing between the forests. One is astounded to see these powerful, ravaged rivers of ice coming down so far. To avoid the wild torrent which rushes down from them, the road takes refuge once more on the right bank of the Arve when the full glory of the view bursts upon us, the peaks of Mont Blanc, Mont Maudit, Mont Blanc du Tacul and the whole chain of the Aiguilles. One sees them also reflected in the waters of Gaillands. A slight ascent and a turn below the villages of Pècles and Mossouls bring us into *Chamonix* (3400 feet, 20 kilometers from *Fayet*).

The Romans knew this valley under the appropriate name of *Campus munitus* — a valley so safely guarded by its mountains that it can only be reached by the Passes over its heights, the Col de Balme to the north the Col de la Forclaz to the south. It is divided into three parishes, Argentière, the Priory of Chamonix and Les Houches. Its inhabitants were fortunate enough to have no history for centuries, even although they lived successively under the rule of the Abbey of St-Michel-de-la-Cluze, the canons of Salanches and the Kings of Sardinia. It was the expedition of Pococke and Windham in 1741 and that of Peter Martel in 1742 that attracted the attention of the world to this valley. But from the time its marvels became known, visitors became more and more



Gorge of the Dioss.

numerous, culminating in the crowds which visit Chamonix to-day.

Its first visitors were taken to Montenvers, where, contemplating the great glacier lying below them, they compared it in their astonishment to petrified waves, to a *Mer de Glace*. This happy phrase stuck to it and became the special name of this glacier. Everyone wanted to see the



Chamonix : Hôtel de Ville.

glaciers of Chamonix; their fame grew and grew. The greatest men and women of France and of Europe, artists as well as crowned heads, crowded to it. De Saussure and Bourrit, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Goethe and Ruskin were followed by many others. Napoleon's two wives, Josephine de Beauharnais and Marie-Louise exerted their wiles here, Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie gave it a new road as well as the Rue Nationale. In our own day Albert I of Belgium has climbed the most difficult Aiguilles.

The Chamonix of today hardly suggests the small village which excited the enthusiasm of its first visitors. It is now a pleasant little town with two principal streets, the *Rue Nationale* and the *Avenue de la Gare*, with many attractive villas radiating out from them. Instead of the primitive little Alpine village of hob-nailed boots, whence the conquerors of virgin peaks set out, it has become a fashionable centre since the railway came to it. To avoid rough walking for feet shod in satin or suède,



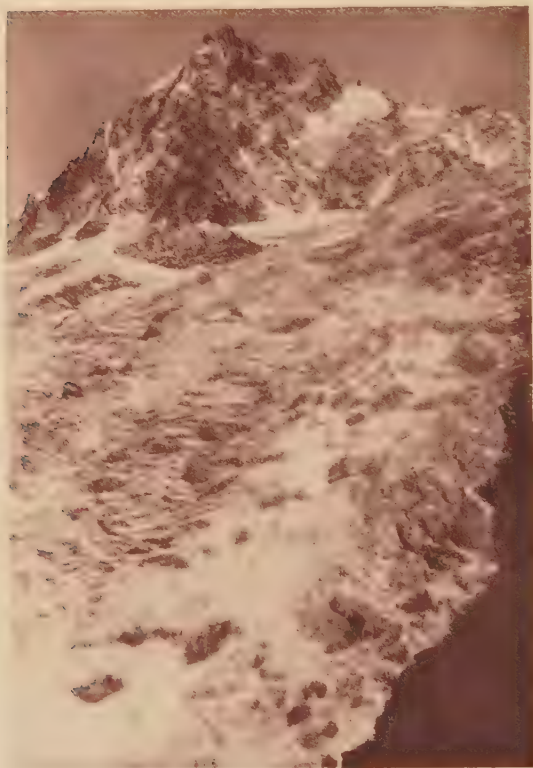
Chamonix : The Balmat and Saussure Monument.

good roads with easy slopes have been laid out and one has only to call a *fiacre* to be transported to the Lakes of Gaillands, Boucher or Paradis, A railway takes one up in a few minutes to the Grand Hotel of Montenvers above the Mer de Glace.

But we must not exaggerate this softening tendency. Robust climbers may still be seen coming out of the most luxurious palaces, as well as out of the most modest hostelries, with or even without guides. They force their way over rocks and ice, intoxicated by the delight of overcoming difficulties. And though one can be transported to Montenvers or Mont Lachat without fatigue, on stepping out of the carriage, nature resumes her sway, and the exploits on the arêtes as well as the ordinary ascents have lost neither their austerity nor their merit. Chamonix still lies at the foot of Mont Blanc; it is an added attraction to observe the contrast between feminine refinements and the endurance of the alpinist.



The Church at Chamonix.



The Glacier des Bossons.

The general impression one takes away from the district is that no one can afford to miss Chamonix. After passing through the valley of Les Houches to Argentière or Monroc, one feels the absolute necessity of climbing some height to get a general impression of the whole valley. The Brévent, so conveniently placed, with its height of 8285 feet, facing the Colossus, was for long the favourite viewpoint, it also possessed a little chimney, the negotiation of which flattered the vanity of its visitors. But since the bridle path of Bel-Achat has been made and the most indolent

can ride up there and dine in a restaurant facing the glaciers, the Brévent seems less popular and the Buet now attracts most visitors. Its height of 10,200 feet makes it a more serious undertaking, part of the ascent has always to be made over snow and the help of mules cannot be relied on further than the Inn at Bérard (6313 feet). Its situation and its height allow one to get a good general idea of the great chain. One sees the actual summit of Mont Blanc better from there than from any other height; how it dominates all the other peaks, supported on one side by Mont Maudit, on the other by the Dôme du Gouter: how its own crests, are marshalled on inferior ranks and the whole wonderful massif forms a magnificent pedestal to the towering summits. It is easy to understand

how this grand spectacle inspired de Saussure, consoled the disappointments of Bourrit, and how artists have attempted to paint it as the most complete expression of the beauty of the Alps. If that is the most striking part of the panorama from Buet, the view extends in other directions to Valais, the Bernese Oberland, the Matterhorn, the Dent Blanch, the Lake of Geneva, the peaks of the Tarentaise and of Dauphiny. From the two ends of the valley, the Col de Balme and the Col de Voza, from the Croix de Fer



L'Aiguille du Dru and the Montenvers Railway.

and the Prarion, one has similar views, the imposing mass of Mont Blanc is always the centre of the picture from whatever point it is seen. Always full of attraction and promise to its worshipper, it is so striking from every part of this region that it becomes an obsession; a stay of any length at Chamonix, rarely terminates without the ascent, or at least the attempted ascent of this Colossus.

Long and arduous as the ascent of Mont Blanc cannot fail to be, it requires nothing but endurance, and is accomplished every year by two or three hundred visitors from every part of the world. After a good night spent at the Hotel of the Grands Mulets, and a rest at the Vallot Refuge, anyone possessed of average physical strength can attain the summit (15,782 feet), of the highest point in Europe and look out on that extraordinary panorama. But if there is no longer any ground for the terrors

*The Glacier.*

felt so vividly by our forefathers, the elements must always be respected. On account of its great height, Mont Blanc is specially exposed to sudden condensations of the atmosphere, and man, overtaken by the storm at these heights is a mere toy in the hands of Nature. It is better to prolong one's stay than to risk one's life and that of one's guides in a foolhardy ascent. The graves of many victims of the storm are to be seen in the little cemetery round the church of Chamonix, and are a significant reminder.

Since the first ascent by Dr Paccard in 1786 and the more famous

one of DeSaussure in 1787, every part of the mountain has been explored but the summit has always exerted the strongest attraction; the neighbouring peaks are more rarely visited. By reason of the attraction of difficulty, the Aiguilles, granite obelisks of relatively no great height, the





Winter in Chamonix.



The Summit of Mont Blanc.

Charmoz, the Grépon, the Flaitière, the Plan and its arêtes, are highly prized by the votaries of acrobatic alpinism, members of the *Groupe de Haute Montagne*.

Not content with the crowds which flock to it in summer, Chamonix was ambitious to become a centre for winter sports, and constructed an outdoor skating-rink, a bob-sleigh and lugeing run, curling rinks, springboards for skiers and a *Palais des Sports*. The view over this snow-bound valley, is for lovers of winter-sports, a sight of absolute beauty.

The travellers by the *Route des Alpes* do not see it in that setting-but what they do see is sufficient to make it unforgettable. Those are indeed rare, who, on the day after their arrival are willing to return to Fayet-Saint-Gervais in the forenoon light. For nowhere are the magic properties of light more fully felt. We have difficulty in persuading ourselves that it is the same district we are passing through if we arrive in the evening and leave in the forenoon. For, as we turn our backs on the Glaciers after passing Les Bossons, we appear to be in an entirely pastoral region; our eyes light gratefully on the green meadows of Les Houches and the Prarion. The aerial viaduct of Sainte-Marie announces yet another set of sensations and when we plunge into the gorge of the Arve with its cool shadows.



The Vallot Shelter.

we shiver with cold till we come in sight of the Rochers des Fiz and the Col d'Anterne, basking in the sun.

After a glimpse of the luxuriant vegetation of Servoz, we again traverse rugged ravines; then, at the commencement of the steep descent



The Inn at the Grands Mulets.

above Chède and its enormous factories we look out over a wide panorama, from the Pointe Percée to the Aiguille du Varens which dominate the fertile plain of Sallanches and the hills of Passy; a foretaste of the beauties of the last stage of our journey.

The field of activity for the tourist who desires knowledge of the mountain heights without the trouble of conquering them yearly grows apace. The construction of the Telefer, which carries one to the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, marks another step towards the conquest of the mountain. In three relays

of comfortable coaches one may be taken to an altitude of some 11,500 feet and then without the least exertion contemplate one of the finest panoramas in existence. Actually, only the first section is open and connects with the station at la Para (5,370 feet) by a very curious passage above the forest and the Glacier des Bossons. In winter the Telefer considerably augments the pleasure of bobsleighbing and lugeing because it connects with the track made by the Syndicate of Chamonix. In summer it brings the tourist to the proximity of the glaciers of Mont Blanc, without the fatiguing ascent through the forests which are perhaps somewhat monotonous as a preliminary to a long climb in the high mountains.



The Aiguille Verte from the Argentière Glacier.



Sallanches and the Mont Blanc Range.

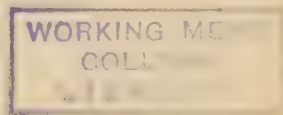
CHAPTER XII

FROM FAYET-SAINT-GERVAIS TO ÉVIAN

Sallanches and the Gorge of Magland. — Cluses and the Col de Châtillon. — The Valley of the Giffre. — Sixt and Fer-à-Cheval. — The Col des Gets. — The Valley of the Dranse. — Thonon and Evian.

On leaving Fayet-Saint-Gervais the road runs near the base of the hills of Combloux, crosses what was formerly the lake of Arve and at Sallanches is joined by the road which comes from Mégève by Combloux (3115).

Sallanches, a little town of broad streets, only dates from the middle of the xixth century. It used to be the capital of this high region, its secular Canons were the overlords of the valley of Chamonix, its notaries the ultimate court of appeal, its markets the standard of prices. It must



have been as picturesque as other mountain villages, but being unfortunately built of wood, and ravaged by fires in 1520 and 1669, it was utterly destroyed by an even greater disaster in 1840. It rose with difficulty from its ruins, but its fortunate situation allowed it to reap a partial advantage from the development of the tourist traffic. From Sallanches one



The Church at Magland.

enjoys such a magnificent view of the chain of Mont Blanc, that the accounts of the early travellers all begin by telling how the windows of their Inns open on this spectacle.

The fertile plain which lies beyond Chède, terminates a short distance from Sallanches; the mountains draw together, and the torrent, followed by the road, runs into a long corridor between the Aiguille de Varens to the east and the Reposoir to the west. This valley of Magland, about 20 kilometers long from south to north, was extolled by its early visitors. We have no sooner entered it

than we see the waterfall of the Nant d'Arpenaz, a sight which never fails to fill us with astonishment. Its waters fall from a height of over 650 feet to arrive at the foot in a rainbow of spray. There is a curious echo from the rocks here and the *Grotte de Balme* is well worth a visit.

We next come to the little town of *Cluses* (1590) near the end of the

valley. Its wide streets of low houses impress us in much the same way as those of Sallanches, and the reason is the same, total destruction by the fire of 1845, followed by rebuilding on a new plan. But there was a time when Cluses was a busy place, during the construction of the railway to Fayet. Cluses was then the end of the line : passengers and goods arriving by the branch line from La-Rochesur-Foron, were here transferred to carriages and diligences for the rest of the journey to Sallanches, Saint-Gervais and Chamonix. Their drivers and conductors were the masters of the situation and their cheery talk filled the streets of the little town. But that did not last long, for in six years Le Fayet became the head of the line and Cluses sank back into its torpor. A watch-making industry and some other little factories give it still a certain activity. Visitors only stop there to visit the *Chartreuse du Repose-soir*, 15 kilometers distant.



Sallanches : The Grande Place and the Church.

A wide loop carries the road up to the *Col de Châtillon* (2420 feet) between the valley of Sixt and that of the Arve; it runs down in an easterly direction to the level of the Giffre and passing the ancient Abbey of Mélan, arrives at Taninges (2100 feet), crossing the road from Annemasse to Sixt.

Taninges, built on both sides of the river at the junction of the Foron



An old house in Magland.

from the thundering waterfall of the Nant d'Ant.

One can make many delightful excursions from here, but Samoëns is above all, the way to Sixt. A drive of 6 kilometers through meadows and gorges brings us to the Abbey of Sixt (2484 feet).

The village which has grown up round the monastery of the

and the Giffre, is one of the chief towns of this picturesque valley. A good road with a steam tramway at one side runs up the right bank through a rich country-side to Samoëns, the capital of the canton and market-centre of the district. This little town stands in a delightful situation, at the upper end of a long plain levelled and enriched by the alluvial deposits of the river. Surrounded by meadowland and near beautiful forests, it is becoming well-known as a summer resort. The church has an interesting porch, its pillars supported on crouching lions a symbol of power through faith often found in the churches of the Briançonnais. An old lime tree of extraordinary size stands in the chief square, not far from an Alpine Garden, the *Jaysinia* and only a few minutes



Magland : Interior of a Barn.

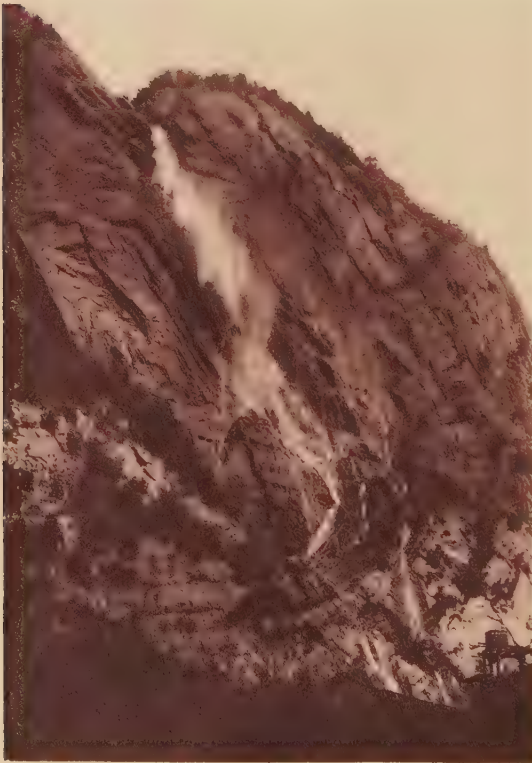


Near Sallanches : The Levaux Gorge and the Aiguille de Varens.

Augustines, lies in a charming situation, sheltered by the heights of the Pointe de Ressachat and looking down a broad valley which give it air and sunshine. The Abbey, which has withstood the outrages of man and of time, has been converted into an hotel. Sixt is a good starting point for numerous excursions, notably that to the Col d'Anterne, (immortalised by Topffer), to the ascent of the Buet by the Grenairon, to that of Tenneverge (9210 feet) but above all, for the lovely walk to the *Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval* and *Fond de la Combe*.

To visit these places we continue up the Giffre (by a road still possible for motors) and in little more than an hour arrive at the *Pont de l'Eau Rouge*. The valley is impressive, enclosed between the heights of the

Grenairon to the south and the Avaudruz to the north: it appears absolutely shut in by these formidable mountains, the peak of Tenneverge glittering above them. A few steps along the bridlepath and the slope on the right opens up and discloses the beautiful *Cirque-du-Fer-à-Cheval*. The precipices, about 1000 feet high which support the glaciers of Cheval Blanc. Finive and Tenneverge, describe a semi-circle four or five kilometers in extent. Every furrow in the rock has its waterfall, which falls right from the top of these cliffs; in the month of June one can count more than



Waterfall at Nant d'Arpenaz.



Cluses.

twenty cascades which fill the air with fine spray. This place has often been compared with the *Cirque de Gavarnie*, but though less well known, it is much larger and more impressive. After passing round the base of Tenneverge, the valley comes to another similar arena, with equally fine waterfalls, the *Fond de la Combe*. This amphitheatre of dark forest, precipitous rocks, verdant pastures and glittering glaciers, forms a whole which is unique in the Alps and which fills the spectator with an almost religious feeling of awe and dread.

If the valley of Sixt were better known, it would rival the valley of Chamonix, but it is an *impasse* for all save the alpinist, and to continue our journey we must return to Taninges.

Following a northerly direction the road leaves the Giffre and enters the side valley of the Foron. It winds through a fine forest, passes the side valley of Arpettaz, rises by a great loop and emerges from the forest on to the vast grassy plateau of the village and *Col des Gets*. (3845 feet). Nature is so radiant and smiling here, and the gradients so gentle, that the village lies in the Pass itself, and for a short distance one can hardly tell which way the waters run. This Pass connects the valleys of the Giffre and the Dranse; the view is not extensive but commands the

*Samoëns.*

meadows and pasturages of one of the most charming districts of the Alps.

After passing across the plateau, the descent begins ; we soon leave this pastoral tract behind and see in the distance the upper valley of the Dranse. The rocky peaks of the Dents Blanches appear high above the village of *Morzine*, lazily spread out at the base of an imposing height (3150 feet). A country village enjoying all the delights of rural life, the houses of Morzine spread over the slopes of three different hills : that to the north leads to the Franco-Swiss *Col de Coux* (6313 and ultimately to Chambéry; that to the south to the *Col de la Golèse* (5483 feet) and Samoëns, that in the centre to the *Col de Jouxplane*. Not so long ago one could live comfortably at Morzine for 4½ francs a day.

One of the branches of the Dranse rises at Morzine and drives several mills. It is soon joined by another branch which serves the village of Montriond and comes down more directly from the Dents Blanches. A little further on the growing river receives on the right the tributary of the Ardent. This stream comes from the Lake of Montriond which used to be a beautiful sheet of water surrounded by dark forests with the gay waterfall of the Ardent above it, like a silver ribbon. One can ascend the Ardent through meadows to the Pas de Chésery (6578 feet) and so to the charming Swiss valley of Champéry.



Waterfalls of Fer à Cheval de Sixt.

But industry has destroyed this sylvan beauty.

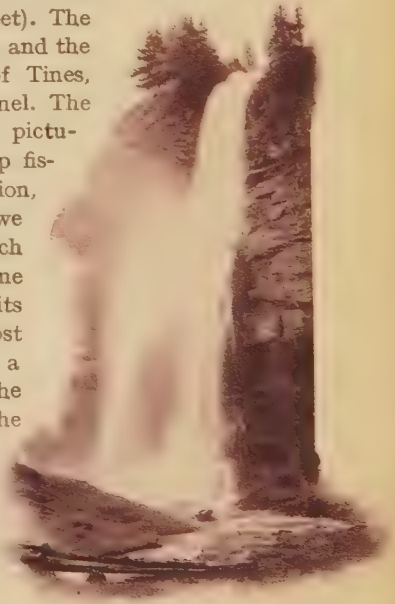
Leaving this quiet retreat, which boasts an hotel and several villas, we proceed down the valley of the Dranse, with its melancholy charm, and pass through the village of *Saint-Jean-d'Aulph* (2590 feet). Neither the village nor the modern church are specially attractive, but close by we see a striking ruin with beautiful Roman arches and learn its sad story. The Cistercian Abbey of Notre-Dame-d'Aulon, founded in the xiith century, prospered so greatly that in the xiiith century it was able to add to its fabric by a beautiful Church built in pure Roman style. The Abbey experienced varying fortunes throughout the centuries but its monks were finally scattered by the French Revolution. The monastery was demolished but its Church was preserved and became the parish church of Saint-Jean-d'Aulph. In 1823 by an inconceivable error of judgement the municipal authorities decided to replace it by another building nearer the village, and it was pulled down. Nothing but the façade with its beautiful doorway and a magnificent arch remained, when the vandalism they were committing dawned on the authorities and the work of demolition was stopped. These ruins are now classified as "historical monuments," but alas! they are only ruins.

With a regretful glance at this melancholy result of rural intelligence



Taninges : Abbey of Mélan.

we continue our journey through a more and more fertile district past the houses of *Le Biot*, the capital of the canton and the valley, terraced on the hill-side (2689 feet). The Dranse cuts its way here through gentler hills and the road accompanies it through the valley of Tines, where it has been necessary to pierce a tunnel. The gorges of the Dranse become more and more picturesque. The river has disappeared into a deep fissure, where a sign-post attracts our attention, *Pont du Diable*. If we alight and follow it, we find ourselves in a subterranean passage, which winds through between immense blocks of stone right down to the level of the water with its falls and rapids and caverns — altogether a most impressive place. The road runs on through a deep gorge. We are almost at the level of the foaming Dranse when we see the heights on the right open up and an equally wild torrent rushing out from it, the junction of the Dranse de Morzine, which we follow, and the Dranse d'Abondance. The road up the latter runs through the neighbouring valley in which Vacheresse, Bonne-



The Rouget Waterfall.

vaux and Abondance are situated, and by the Col de Morgins leads to the attractive Val d'Illeiez. That alpine region, though less high, is no less picturesque and attractive: it resembles Switzerland to which it lies so near, but the grandeur of Switzerland is tempered by the geniality and simplicity of Savoy.

A new tributary appears at the *Pont de Bioge*, the Dranse de Bellevaux which drains the valley of the Tullin.

But soon the heights grow apart and become lower; less narrowly enclosed the Dranse spreads out in a stony estuary. But the wide expanse of the Lake of Geneva appears as a compensation. The houses and the tower of *Thonon* are seen against the sky and after passing through large vineyards we run into that little Savoyard town.

The ancient capital of Chablais, formerly surrounded by ramparts, Thonon still has that crowded aspect peculiar to walled towns. But the many wars it had to suffer, have left it no traces of its ancient buildings. Beautifully situated on a terrace about 200 feet above the Lake, the air is exhilarating and the view delightful. To add to its attractions, Thonon has captured the waters of the Versoie and established mineral baths, thus becoming a watering-place. It is connected by a funicular railway with its suburb of *Rives*, which serves as its port on the Lake and is much frequented by summer visitors. In its immediate neighbourhood, smiling and attractive like the whole of this district, two places deserve special



The Horseshoe Fall.

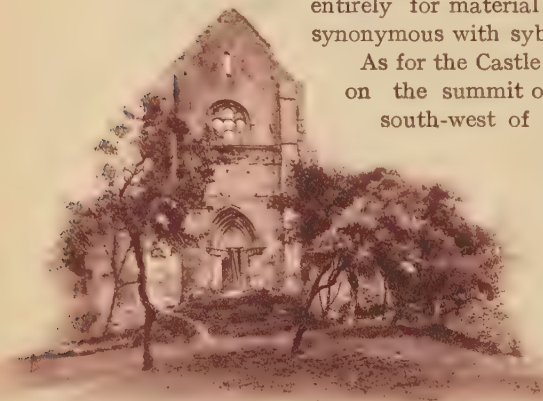


St. Jean-d'Aulph.

mention, the *Château de Ripaille* and the *Château d'Allinges*. One goes down by a winding road through the vineyards to the shore where the Castle of Ripaille stands on a wide promontory. Amadeus VIII, Duke of Savoy, retired to this castle after his abdication : he became Pope under the title of Felix V, but renounced the tiara also. His extraordinary history made such an impression on those who regarded him as living entirely for material enjoyments that Ripaille became synonymous with sybaritism and gourmandism.

As for the Castle of Allinges, its ruins stand proudly on the summit of a wooded hill (2336 feet) to the south-west of Thonon. It commanded a magnificent view over Chablais and the Lake and its situation made it a dangerous fortress in the hands of a rebel vassal. It was destroyed in the beginning of the xviiith century by the King of Sardinia but a chapel remains which was dedicated by St. Francis de Sales and has become a much frequented place of pilgrimage.

St. Jean-d'Aulph : Ruins of the Abbey.





Gorges of the Dranse.



Thonon.

Before reaching the shores of the Lake, the *Route des Alpes* turns to the right and makes for the desolate estuary of the Dranse : that stony waste crossed, it comes again to vineyards and grassy fields, the country of Chablais. Always in sight of the Lake, it passes below the Amphion and after a delightful run along the shore, below the trees by the Lakeside, it arrives at the port of *Evian*.

The ancient *Aquianium* of the Romans, Evian was for long a turbulent little city, beautifully situated in a sloping amphitheatre above the Lake of Geneva facing Lausanne and Ouchy. It had no prospect of a brilliant future but at the beginning of the nineteenth century one of its citizens called Cachat, had the happy idea of exploiting the waters of its springs. The sale of these waters, which contained no salt and had no taste, was for long a languid business, and it was not till towards the middle, of the century that their merit and their purity were recognized. But once their rare and precious qualities, were recognized they became fashionable.

Then visitors wanted to come and drink them on the spot and the watering place of Evian has, thanks to its beautiful situation, grown and prospered.

A wise administration has provided many amuse-



Thonon : Port de Rives.

ments to attract and entertain strangers. A large and shady Promenade allows one to walk for several kilometers by the side of the Lake; a pier gives easy access to the steamers; the Baths, and Casino adorn the quay by their pleasing facades, and numerous hotels, some of the first rank, are to be found in the town. Evian has, for the summer season acquired much the reputation of Nice for the winter season : its quay recalls the *Promenade des Anglais*, and its hotels rival the hotels of Cimiez. No place could be better suited for the terminus of the *Route des Alpes*.



Evian : Quai du Casino.

Uniting all the beauties of the French Alps, combining energy and elegance, this fortunate little city cannot fail to grow and develop as the gateway to the most marvellous region of France.

Evian is without doubt one of the most enjoyable places of the French Alps. On the opposite shore of the lake lies Geneva and a service of boats makes the passage between the two places easy and agreeable and one can almost say that a tour of the lake has become a classic excursion.

Geneva is really made up of several towns, each having its own characteristics. The old town it is which above all possesses the most interesting treasures in the realms of Art and History : the Cathedral of St. Pierre, the two high towers of which are so well known, the Hôtel de Ville, the Arsenal, the Palais de Justice — all worthy of recording.

The new town is built on the site of decayed old houses which once used to border the ancient port. It is gay and luxurious, given



The Port of Evian.

over to commerce and hotels. Beautiful gardens give lovely views on to the lake and Mont Blanc glitters on the distant horizon.

Geneva seen from the lake presents an enchanting sight and its squat hills set on either shore strewn with white villas and verdant groves complete a perfect picture. Like Evian, Geneva is a capital worthy of Leman.

Thus our journey ends in a country full of charm and loveliness. The quiet of the lake invites repose. But for those who desire more there is the "Route du Jura", which will take you to the Vosges, to Alsace and Lorraine. There will be new joys and new charms. The snowy heights of the Alps will give place to the rich meadows of the Jura with its wooded hills. But always there will be the "tant doux pays de France" of the chroniclers.



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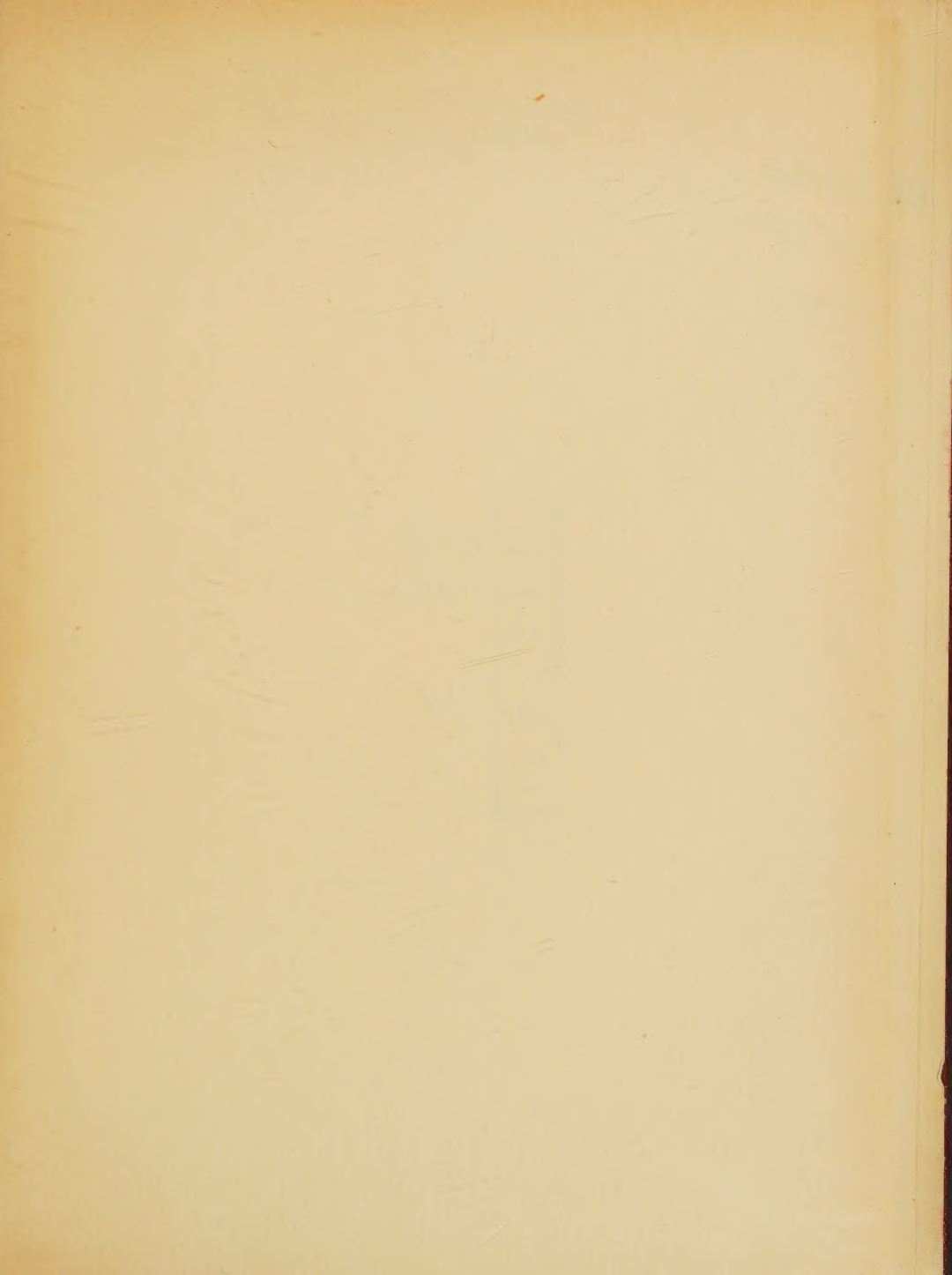


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